

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

Volume 35 Issue 3 Spring 2015



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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human Development Magazine is a quarterly publication for people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others. This includes persons involved in religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, pastoral care and education interested in the development of the whole person.

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

(ISSN 0197-3096) Spring 2015 Volume 35

Issue 3 is published Quarterly by Guest House, Inc. 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, Michigan 48360-1139.

Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is pending at Lake Orion, MI and additional mailing offices.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATE

United States and Canada, \$39.50 for one year; all other countries \$59.50 for one year, online/digital subscription: \$39.50 for one year.

Please visit website for discount subscription rates hdmag.org

Single Print copies: United States and Canada, \$10.00 plus shipping; all other countries, \$20.00 plus shipping.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to

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P.O. Box 292674, Kettering, OH 45429-0674

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Kettering, OH 45429-0674

Letters to the editor and all other correspondence may be sent to:

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

E-mail: editor@hdmag.org

Phone: 1-877-545-0557

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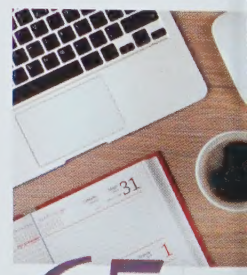
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PLEASE NOTE: In the Winter 2014 Issue of HD Magazine we indicated that there would be a Part II to the Dowd article, when in fact both parts were published in that issue.

THE SEASON OF RENEWAL

Dear Friends:

Spring, 2015

Remember those cold, snowy days and Arctic nights when all we wanted to do was stay indoors, wrapped in blankets, while clutching a steaming cup of hot chocolate? Looking back, I realize that although we made contact by phone, I never saw my neighbors until we met outside to clean off our cars. We discussed the cold weather and when to expect the next snow storm, while keeping a constant inventory on food and essential supplies. Prior to New Year's Eve, a child's movie called *Frozen* became a box-office hit. The theme song was played frequently on the radio. Every time I heard the song "Let It Go" I would eagerly sing along, while wending my way through traffic, hoping by some miracle that the towering snow-banks surrounding me would oblige us all by suddenly melting, but to no avail! As though to offset the grim prospect of ice and snow that would last for all eternity, some words from Lamentations sprang to mind: "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him" (3:25).

So I waited, but with sub-zero temperatures and one storm after another, patience was not my strongest suit. Nevertheless, true to form, spring finally appeared on the scene. Winter and its darkness subsided; the season of light was made manifest, leaving the anguish of winter far behind. We began to see, smell and hear the initial nuances: the crocus popping out of the earth, tiny leaves appearing on the trees, the sweet scent of flowers beginning to bloom; pansies, violets, tulips, daffodils and gleaming sunlight, all signaling the re-birth of God's glorious Nature. People were out again, energized by signs of new life, warm weather, and the increased number of daylight hours. How delightful!

I have always welcomed new beginnings. When I ponder deeply on this beautiful season of re-birth, renewal, rejuvenation, and resurrection, my soul is awakened by so many images. Moreover, there is such peace in knowing that God is with me and has sustained me through many dark days of successful recuperation from physical issues. I find myself asking for God's forgiveness. It is a very humbling experience to be dependent when I was so used to serving others. I began to realize that God knows what I need, long before I do. What I want may not always be what I need, so I decided to forgive myself and strengthen my trust and faith in Him who knows me better than I know myself.

On that note, Pope Francis exhorts: "Let us not be closed to the newness that God wants to bring into our lives... let us never give up: there are no situations which God cannot change...or forgive if only we open ourselves to Him" (Easter Vigil Homily of Pope Francis, 2014). In spring everything and everyone is immersed in a process of change. Now is the time to go forward, as I take the best of the past along with me.

Easter, the sacred celebration of Christ's Resurrection from the dead, is the perennial focus of spring. For Christians, it is the holiest of days, the climax and center of the liturgical year. However, Easter is not restricted to twenty-four hours; rather, it is a season that begins on Easter Sunday and continues for seven full weeks, culminating with Pentecost Sunday, which ushers in the arrival of the Holy Spirit. The Easter season is the most joyful and festive season of the Christian year. What newness and change will the risen Christ bring to our lives? Will we be open to receive whatever He has to offer us?

Essentially, faith in the Risen Christ transforms our lives. He brings joy, peace, life and hope to all those who believe in Him. These are gifts we need for our human and spiritual re-birth. Easter is a time for the joyful and enthusiastic re-discovery of the sources of our faith. The way we meet the Risen Christ is through the Word and through the Eucharist. As people of living faith, we must carry the Word of God to everyone we meet and be continually nourished by the Eucharist. Then, with our hearts filled with love, we can truly proclaim: Alleluia! He has risen! Alleluia!

As leader of a spirituality group at the hospital, I always began our session by asking: "What one thing happened since we last met for which you are truly grateful?" Typically, they would express thanks for what they had and for what others did for them. Nourishing such an attitude of gratitude can indeed transform us. As grateful people we become more aware of (and sensitive to) the goodness alive in other people. In addition, we become more sensitive to the goodness, forgiveness, mercy and compassion of the God who dwells among us.

Thank you, Jesus, for loving us so much!

Sr Monica Vinges

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"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

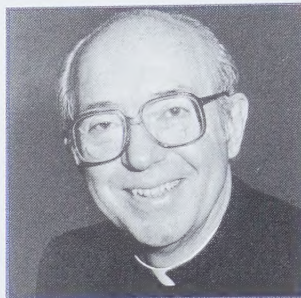
-Romans 12:2



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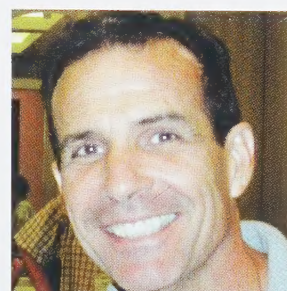
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READER EMAILS

"...I was overjoyed when I learned that Guesthouse had taken up publishing "Human Development Magazine" so I renewed our subscription immediately. I was delighted to receive Volume 35 Issue 2 Winter 2014..."

*Sincerely,
Sister Denece Billesberger, sej*

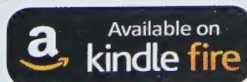
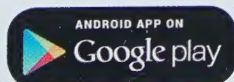
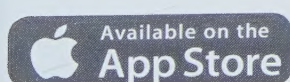
"I am so glad that you guys have taken the leadership for HD. In the past there was no way of contacting the Editor Board. Now you have more connectivity and visibility."

*Thanks for your leadership.
Michael Cooper, S.J.*

"I look forward to reading the next issue of HD and reflecting on the wisdom and insight that will be shared. Be assured of my prayers for you and for all who engaged in the work of bringing HD to us."

-Sr. Joan

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EDITORIAL BOARD CLOSE UP

MONICA APPLEWHITE, PH.D.



Monica Applewhite holds a Master's of Science in Social Work and a Ph.D. in Clinical Social Work. She has spent the past 22 years studying abuse and using her findings to help organizations prevent and respond to incidents and allegations of abuse. She has worked with more than 300 organizations worldwide that serve children, youths and vulnerable adults including extensive on-site work with boarding and day schools, residential treatment programs, foster care, adoption, child care, mentorship programs, hospitals, child protective services, religious organizations, family preservation services, kinship care, athletic and recreational programs, resident camps, day camps, waterparks and pools. She has also worked directly with more than 30 Catholic Dioceses and 150 religious institutes of men in the United States. She has also worked with the Roman Catholic Church in Rome, Ireland,

Spain, India, Philippines, Poland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and multiple locations in Central America and the South Pacific Islands.

Dr. Applewhite's areas of expertise include the historical development of the standard of care for sexual abuse prevention and response, screening and selection protocols, female and juvenile sexual offenders, responding to survivors of abuse, monitoring and supervision systems, internal feedback systems, policy development for the prevention of abuse, risk management procedures for those with histories of sexual offending, internal investigation protocols in organizations, and current best practices to protect the vulnerable.

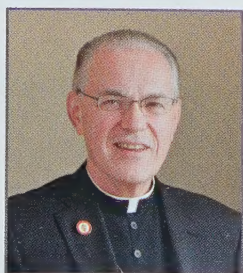
VERY REV. JOHN J. CECERO, S.J., PH.D.



A native of Philadelphia, Fr. John Cecero, S.J., earned a Bachelor of Arts in French and Philosophy from Gonzaga University (Spokane, Wash.), and a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology (Cambridge, Mass.). From The George Washington University (Washington, D.C.), he received a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. For 15 years, from 1998-2013, he was a professor of psychology at Fordham University (Lincoln Center and Bronx campuses). In July 2014, he became Provincial of the New York Province (Society of Jesus). He became Provincial of the USA Northeast Province in December 2014, when the New York and New England provinces were combined. Fr. Cecero is the author of *Praying Through Our Lifetraps: A Psycho-Spiritual Path*

to Freedom, a book-length guide published in 2002 by Resurrection Press. He is also the author of presentations that were produced in 2009 under the title *Spirituality, Psychology and Virtue: A Catholic's Guide to a Flourishing Life* which were distributed in a series of CDs by Now You Know Media.

BISHOP DONALD F. HANCHON



Bishop Donald F. Hanchon was ordained a priest on October 19, 1974 and made an Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit on May 5, 2011. He oversees the Central Region of the Archdiocese, which encompasses the City of Detroit along with the cities of Hamtramck and Highland Park. Guest House graduates figured prominently in his formation as a priest, and he currently serves as Archbishop Vigneron's representative to Guest House. His areas of ministry have concentrated on cross-cultural ministry to African Americans and Hispanics. He serves on the Guest House Board of Directors and is a member of Human Development's Editorial Board.

ABOUT GUEST HOUSE INC.



Fifty-nine years ago, Austin Ripley saw a unique need and founded Guest House to treat religious and clergy who suffer from chemical addiction such as alcoholism. Since then, Guest House has expanded our mission to include providing the information, education, treatment and care needed to assure that clergy, men and women religious and seminarians suffering from alcoholism, addictions and other behavioral health conditions have the best opportunity for quality recovery and overall health and wellness. At Guest House, we believe that the unique nature of the religious life requires special, personalized attention

which honors not only our clients' human dignity, but their calling and commitment as well. Special attention is paid to ministering to the individual spiritually, medically and physically.

Our Services Include:

- Comprehensive evaluation services including psychological
- spiritual and psycho-social components
- An intensive, multi-modal,
- interpersonally-focused treatment program
- Aftercare and follow-up
- Consultation for Catholic hierarchy and religious order leadership.



The medical and clinical staff stays abreast of the most current information and practices to provide our clients with the latest in treatment and holistic wellness. Since our inception, 8,000 clients from all over the world have benefitted from our scenic 188 acre campus, which provides the serenity and reflective environment needed for recovery, healing and sustained sobriety.

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Learn More at guesthouse.org

Our treatment programs are led by two committed addiction specialists:



Joseph Shoots, MA, LLP, CAAC, currently is the Executive Director of the Men's Treatment Center. He has extensive experience with treating a wide range of mental health issues, including specialized focus in Substance Use disorders and addictions of all kinds, as well as adult anxiety and depression. Joe practices an individualized approach to therapy and is compassionate and caring. He has earned a Master's Degree in Clinical and Humanistic Psychology and is an International Certified Advanced Addiction Counselor. Prior to coming to Guest House, Joe was in private practice treating all adult issues and providing family therapy.



Mary Ellen Merrick, IHM, D. Min., MAC, has taught courses on Substance Abuse and Clinical Supervision at Loyola College in Maryland and served as Senior Therapist at STARR (Specialized Trauma Treatment, Advocacy and Recovery) Center in Columbia, Maryland. She holds a Master of Sciences in Psychology/Pastoral Counseling from Loyola College and a Masters in Science in Reading Education from Marywood College. Her career has included crisis intervention, psychotherapy practices with adults (depression, anxiety, ACOA issues, transition issues, evaluation), and working with members of religious communities in need of mental health assistance. She was an Affiliate Professor for Psychology and Pastoral Counseling at Loyola College before joining Guest House in 2010 as the Director of Women's Services.

*If you have a need for an evaluation, referral, help with an intervention,
or simply have a question, please contact:*

Joe Shoots, Director of Men's Programs, at: jshoots@guesthouse.org

Sister Mary Ellen Merrick, Director of Women's Programs, at: memerrick@guesthouse.org

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SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE LITTLE WAY OF THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

By Brother Joseph F. Schmidt, FSC

Christian renewal and growth is not primarily about ethics. Good behavior does, of course, result from growth in the spiritual life, but our spiritual life is primarily about participating in the Divine life within us and so is fundamentally about growth in grace and love.

All religions preach good ethics but Christianity is the world's only incarnational religion and the only religion that invites and empowers us to live God's Trinitarian life in our human experience. Fear can result in good behavior, but the Christian life is primarily about love not fear; about faith and Christ's Spirit empowering us.

The Holy Spirit active in the Christian community and in the lives of the saints, particularly contemporary saints - most of whom, of course, will never be canonized - inspires and empowers us into a deeper participation in the God-life. Theological books and spiritual theories are helpful, but sacramental realities and flesh and blood are more compelling.

In this brief essay, I would like to focus on one saint, who during the last 100 years or so has inspired many in their spiritual growth. Christians of all denominations as well as non-Christians and atheists throughout the world have been encouraged by the holy life and spiritual wisdom of Thérèse of Lisieux. A contemporary, ordinary saint, and now a Doctor of the Church, she never graduated from grade school and lived a simple life without special spiritual experiences. Except for noticing her great patience and kindness, many nuns in Carmel who lived closely with her for nine years, thought her life was ordinary. She died at 24 in 1897.



She encourages us because she reveals with great transparency in her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, how imperfect and human a saint really is. This honest and intimate view into the heart of a saint is rare in spiritual literature and can be particularly helpful in our own spiritual growth.

LOVE WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Thérèse's life quest was to discover "the science of love," and at the end of her life she finally found this pearl of great price - to be love at the heart of the mystical body, the Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (826), which quotes Thérèse more often than any other woman, suggests that this vocation of love is the foundation and essence of any spiritual growth. It is our vocation no matter what state of life we are in.

To point out that the essence of our spiritual life is to be a loving person might sound like only pious trivia. But Thérèse's insight is a profound rediscovery of the essence of the Gospel, as Pope John Paul II said when he

made her a Doctor in 1997, and her wisdom is a much needed healing for our violent times. The heart of her teaching is simple: to be a loving follower of Jesus and to participate in God's life within us, we need to avoid harboring any violence in our heart. We might momentarily feel hostility and even spontaneously act violently against ourselves or others, but the loving person is willing to forgive and ask for forgiveness, and does not cultivate violence against anything or anyone, even against personal defects and social evils. It may sound like a truism that real love and violence are not compatible, but in practice we often join love and violence. History has been plagued with violence perpetrated in the name of love. The history of parenting, for example, is a story of well-intentioned people, who have inflicted violence, thinking they were acting in a loving way. The history of warfare, capital punishment, and slavery is similar. None of this violence is necessarily done with evil intentions and some of it is done explicitly in the name of love: love of family, religion, church, country, culture, principles, God.

In the case of Thérèse, who lived a very secluded monastic life, she did not recognize much of the social violence. She saw clearly, however, the violence she did to herself and she experienced the violence of well-intentioned nuns she lived with. She also recognized the structural violence embedded in the Christian spirituality of her day. She recognized the blindness and self-centeredness that poisoned love in her heart. At the same time she discovered some psychological indicators, some qualities in her heart, that told her she was on the path of authentic love and warned her when she stumbled onto the path of violence. Her life and teachings, then, become a lens to see the violence in our own experience. Thérèse can assist us to become more sensitive to the various subtle disguises of violence and point us on the way of Gospel love. In this way she is a valuable teacher in our spiritual renewal and growth.

THÉRÈSE'S GROWTH IN LOVE

Remarkably early in life Thérèse had a "complete conversion" that transformed her and put her on the path of her Little Way of spirituality. Her transformation was not, of course, a conversion in the sense of a change in religious affiliation or even a conversion in the sense that St. Augustine or St. Paul speak of converting from great sin to great virtue. Thérèse's conversion was not an unusual experience; it was similar to the simple experience that we all have – the experience of being called-up-short by an offhand remark that we hear by chance.

Thérèse, just a few days before her fourteenth birthday, was returning with her father and her older sister Céline from Christmas midnight mass. It was about 1:30 in the morning. Her father saw that Thérèse filled with youthful anticipation was about to stage the family's usual Christmas ritual (a variation of the childish pretence of believing in Santa Clause.) But he was tired. Not wanting to offend Thérèse, he expressed his impatience quietly to Céline, remarking to the effect, "When will Thérèse ever grow up"? Thérèse heard the criticism but did not react. She was deeply wounded but continued walking up the steps to put her hat and coat in her room. She had been especially intent on pleasing her father on this Christmas night and she was a failure.

Céline, knowing that Thérèse had overheard the sharp remark believed, that Thérèse would follow her usual pattern of bursting into tears.

The heart of her
teaching is simple:
to be a loving
follower of Jesus
and to participate in
God's life within us.





For the past ten years, since the loss of her mother, Thérèse had developed an extreme sensitivity and had fussed over and cried about the least thing. If Thérèse began to weep now, their Father would become more distressed and Christmas would be ruined. Céline rushed up the stairs after Thérèse to prevent her from making a teary scene. But Thérèse ignored Céline's advice and, she says, came down the steps a new person: "Jesus had changed her heart."

In that instant of her conversion, God had done what Thérèse said she had been trying in vain to do during the decade since her mother's death. During that time she had been practicing virtue in a "strange way." She had too often been acting not in authentic love but to be thought of as a good and loving person. She had been doing acts of virtue not to please God, but to please and impress others so that she would be affirmed and held close. Now, in a

sense of relief and gratitude, she recognized her ambiguous motivation.

She also recognized that she had been holding on to the pain of the loss of her mother and that this contributed to her extreme sensitivity. She had lost her childhood spontaneity and joy, and had become withdrawn and excessively emotional. Too often during those last ten years, she now saw, she had allowed herself to be overpowered by her feelings, and had been living out of her false self, on the edge of codependency.

In this illumination of self-knowledge she saw that her extreme sensitivity since her mother's death was, as she acknowledged, "a terrible fault." Her conversion was a "night of light," and also an experience of empowerment, making her "strong and courageous". She had rediscovered her true strength of soul lost at the death of her mother. She was now able

She came down the steps a new person:

“Jesus had changed her heart.”

to embrace her inner freedom and willingly accept the pain of her mother-loss. She had the courage to acknowledge her responsibility for losing her true self to the domination of her feelings. She was willing to accept the suffering of being imperfect.

Further, she became aware that by submitting to the power of her feelings she had been doing violence to herself. She had been violating her own integrity, disrespecting her own inner authority and not claiming her inner power and freedom. By her conversion Thérèse experienced more fully the energy of her true self, and the activity of the Spirit in her. She stepped off the path of self-violence and onto the path of authentic love. For the rest of her life she would walk this way of love, not always perfectly but as faithfully as she could, creatively discovering that path even as she walked it.

When she came down the steps on that Christmas night, she re-enacted the family ritual her father had dreaded. But now, as the new person who had found herself, she was able to act with inner freedom, compassion and creativity. She now responded to her father's needs on his terms and not from her own self-centered needs. Her spontaneity and authentic happiness delighted her father. He was drawn out of his weariness and joy filled his heart.

At that moment also, Thérèse avoided the violent poison of self-condemnation or condemning anyone else. She did not become violent to herself by cultivating any thoughts and feelings of self-accusation or self-pity for being a failure. And she did not harbor any violence against her father by accusing and blaming him for her distress. She was willing to bear serenely the pain of being displeasing to herself. She accepted who she was in her weakness, and she was able to express her real self, her real giftedness to her father.

Her conversion had sown the seeds that would flower into her Little Way of spirituality, and had begun to reveal to her the psychological indicators, the qualities of heart that would help her discern and express authentic love: inner freedom, compassion, creativity, willingness, self-surrender and gratitude.

INNER FREEDOM, COMPASSION AND CREATIVITY

The insight and empowerment of her complete conversion became immediately important for Thérèse when, less than fifteen months later, she joined the two dozen nuns in the cloistered convent.

Now, as a new person, her feelings would no longer overpower her, violate her integrity or coerce her. She would still have the tendency to please others, but she would befriend that tendency maturely in the context of reason and faith, and put it to good use. By continuing freely and creatively to develop a pleasing personality, she would become a bridge of peace in the Carmelite community. All the nuns in the cloister were older than Thérèse, many were old enough to be her mother, some her grandmother. These were the women who for years praised Thérèse as a child for being so beautiful, loving and pious, but now they became the disciplinarians who corrected her harshly into the proper details of community life. Thérèse was again in the presence of violence, this time the violence of well-intentioned, holy people doing the right thing with the right motive but in the wrong way.

Thérèse desired to grow in love and yet she never completely felt that she liked every sister. She bore this self-disappointment as one of the many necessary sufferings required of a loving person. She had the willingness and inner freedom regardless of her feelings to love all the

sisters in compassionate and creative ways. In compassion Thérèse walked in the shoes of each sister. She quickly saw those who were harsh and antagonistic had been subjected to harshness and rejection in their own lives. Those she found troublesome were themselves deeply troubled and those who were disturbing were disturbed in their own heart. In her inner freedom Thérèse was willing to learn not to take the frequent scolding and harsh corrections personally. These were women who were trying to help her act properly in their lifestyle. They were trying to help her become perfect as they themselves were striving for perfection.

In her creativity Thérèse adjusted and adapted herself, as best she could, to the needs of each of the sisters. When, after only five years, she had become so respected in the community that she became the de facto director of novices, she creatively tailored her teachings and her corrections specifically to each novice. To encourage one she revealed her own weaknesses, to prevent dependency in another she established personal boundaries. She corrected one with consolation, another with confrontation. To one she was humorous to another stern.

As Thérèse lived in community, her desire to discover “the science of love” never faltered, but she had little outside understanding or support. She developed her spiritual path mainly with the guidance of the heart-qualities of love, the psychological indicators seeded in her heart by her conversion. Trusting her own experience in an internal dialogue with the Gospel, the best of the Carmelite tradition and Church teaching, she relied, as she said, on her only spiritual director, Jesus.

At the end of her autobiography Thérèse humorously told stories of her encounters with difficult sisters: the story of her being splashed

with laundry water, and the story of the sister who sat behind her in chapel and drove her crazy by making constant clicking sounds with her teeth. She described her inability to please the grumpy old sister whom she guided daily to the refectory; she told of the smile she constantly gave to one difficult sister who was ignored by all the others. And she related the story of her own violent feelings toward one nun who became angry with her.

In religious circles during the 1930s, 40s and 50s, at the height of Thérèse’s popularity, these stories became common currency as examples of the simplicity of holiness. But sometimes they were used to shame young people into responsible behavior or into a passive obedience of just “offering it up.” Using Thérèse’s stories to shame or coerce cheapens Thérèse’s spirituality. Such use contributes to the humorous question: why was such a sentimental wimp canonized in the first place? But Thérèse is not the patron saint of doormats or masochists. Hers are micro-stories of steadfast love in the presence of provocations. They are stories of dying daily and shed light on how to manage and befriend inner distress coming from perceived wrongs. They are stories of how a saint deals with violence without retaliating. They are stories of how to reach out to difficult and marginalized people. They are, in short, stories of how to love your enemy.

Even Dorothy Day, at the beginning of her Christian life, in her energy to address social problems wondered what Thérèse could possibly teach her. Fifty years later, Dorothy Day studied Thérèse’s spirituality, wrote a biography of Thérèse and dedicated the Catholic Worker movement to this little “wimpy” saint, noting that the holy courageous power of nonviolent love was what the world really needed to confront personal and social violence.

...the holy courageous power of nonviolent love
was what the world really needed...

WILLFULNESS AND WILLINGNESS

Thérèse had pondered Jesus' statement to love your enemy. At first she wondered how she could fulfill that command, since, as she said, "We don't have any enemies in Carmel." But then she added wryly, "but there are feelings." She knew what it was to have feelings of being in the presence of the enemy as well as having feelings of being an enemy toward others. In the presence of harshness and violence Thérèse experienced spontaneous feelings of hurt, anger and revenge. She humbly acknowledges her own weaknesses that contributed to her hostile feelings, but she was wise and courageous enough not to cultivate those hostile feelings and not to spin out self-justifying excuses. Her stories give us an important insight into the way a contemporary saint thinks; feels; decides; and acts.

Thérèse was not perfect according to the standards of the convent. In her writings she readily exposes her limitations as she attempted to lovingly do everything correctly. She admits that not being perfect was painful in a religious community where nuns thought of themselves called to "the state of perfection," and strove to be perfect.

In Thérèse's era the goal of the spiritual life, in and out of the convent, was to become perfect, often by severe ascetical means and extraordinary pious practices. At this time in history, this all made sense, because God was thought to be angry and vengeful, waiting to condemn the least mistake. Jansenism, although condemned as a heresy more than a century earlier, still poisoned the spirituality of Thérèse's day. Thérèse imagined God as Jesus' infinitely loving and merciful Father. In their striving to be perfect to placate God's wrath, to avoid hell, and to help others progress in the state of perfection, some sisters were harsh and violent to themselves and violent in correcting community shortcomings. Thérèse saw that the good purposes of the sisters were being trumped by their willful attempts to bully themselves and others into holiness. Thérèse herself, in the convent environment, found it

difficult to escape this spiritual trap of acting with the violence of coercion to correct a perceived wrong in her or others.

Thérèse knew, from her conversion experience, that coercion was not the way of love. It was not the way God loved her in her weakness and was not the way she was to love. She wanted to welcome God's life gratefully as a gift and not, by violently striving to be perfect, claim it as her own.

Thérèse herself had exceptionally strong willpower. Her mother had noted that as a child, Thérèse's willpower had erupted into frightful tantrums. Later Thérèse saw that her willfulness masked itself as spiritual ambition. As she matured spiritually, Thérèse directed the power of her will away from willfulness. She focused her willpower in a spirit of willingness to do God's will, and in this way she grew in compassion and creativity in the presence of violence within herself and violence directed toward her.

SELF-SURRENDER AND GRATITUDE

Thérèse advised her novices to grow in the spirit of gratitude and self-surrender into God's will. She believed that if their self-discipline was the practice of bearing the sufferings of being nonviolent, loving persons, their growth in the Christian life would come as a gift from God. Their spiritual growth would not be a willful project but a willing acceptance of God's transforming and empowering love. When one novice wanted permission to share this spiritual teaching with her family, Therese refused, telling the novice that the teaching could be misunderstood. Willingness and self-surrender could be misinterpreted as irresponsibility, or as giving up and doing nothing toward spiritual growth. But Thérèse taught willingness and self-abandonment as activities of willpower – a nonviolent activity of the will to love and to endure the inevitable sufferings of being a loving person in an imperfect world.

Thérèse even used this spirit of self-abandonment into God's will to solve her problem of aridity and falling asleep in private prayer – a suffering she endured during all the years she was in Carmel. Her solution was to imagine God as a loving parent who loves the little child as much, or even more, when the child is asleep. In that understanding Thérèse was willing to abandon herself with gratefulness into God's arms even in her inability to pray perfectly.

Knowing that she could never be perfect in the moral sense of being free from weaknesses and sinfulness, her prayer became that of the publican. At the end of her life she wrote that her path was not the Pharisee's, but the way of the publican. She learned from Jesus' parable and Paul's teaching to go to God in her weaknesses and failures not her strengths and successes.

THE LITTLE WAY

At the end of her life, Thérèse formulated her Little Way of love. With nonviolent love she would resist the wrongs and sins within herself and the wrongs and sins in the community. She would resist evil with goodness as Jesus did, dying daily.

She avoided willful imagery like struggling up the stairway of perfection, or climbing the ladder of holiness, imagery common in her day. Instead she found a new image, the elevator. Jesus' arms were the spiritual elevation and she would simply, gratefully surrender herself into love. God would do the heavy lifting. It was the Gospel way, not the way of Jansenism, perfectionism, or willfulness.

Becoming more and more certain she was living with God's life in her, Thérèse stopped striving to reach for God. She believed she was already in God's heart and did not need to long for God. She "had" God, by letting God "have" her. The prayer of her Little Way was bold self-abandonment into God's will at every moment. She pictured herself as Mary Magdalene who came to Jesus in intimacy and boldness. At

the end of her life she prayed that she would be overcome in the waves of God's infinite tenderness.

Suffering excruciating physical, emotional and spiritual distress during the last months of her life, Thérèse had fleeting thoughts of suicide, but her deepest desire was to be loved to death by God.

THÉRÈSE TODAY

Growth in the spiritual life, Thérèse believed was God's work, and her work was a patient, prayerful, persevering spirit of faith and a heart of willing love. She deployed her love in the nonviolent action flowing from inner freedom, compassion, creativity, willingness, self-surrender and gratitude. These were the heart-qualities, the psychological indicators of Gospel love that Thérèse had discovered as she walked her Little Way.

So what would Thérèse say to us today to inspire us into spiritual renewal and growth? She would, perhaps, say things like this: 'Take seriously Jesus' call to love our enemies and measure your spiritual growth by your willingness to fulfill that call as best you can. Notice that there are enemies inside yourself as well as enemies outside to be loved. Express your desire for spiritual growth by not harboring thoughts and feelings of self-loathing or of resentment, harshness, or retaliation toward others.

- Avoid acting in violence even when correcting yourself or others and even when resisting perceived structural injustices and wrongs. Be creative and compassionate, and bear serenely what you cannot change.
- You don't have to like others to love them. Nonviolence will be your basic way of loving yourself and others. Your love will involve more than simply being nonviolent, but it will never involve less. When you fail to love do not compound the failure by being violent to others by accusing or blaming, or violent to yourself by self-

condemnation or self-pity. Return to prayer, to patience and perseverance.

THEN, THÉRÈSE MIGHT ADD:

- In your private prayer, pray the way you can, not the way you can't. You don't need to read prayers or recite prayer formulas. Let your prayer be without too much fuss or agenda. You don't have to have special prayer experiences. Go to God with empty hands and simply let God love you. In prayer you will find your own unique way to fulfill your vocation to be a loving person.
- To be holy, to live in God's life you don't need to be perfect. Accept God's forgiveness and mercy and share forgiveness and mercy with others.
- You don't have to know where you are in any schema of holiness; trust that for the moment you are where God wants you to be and that in your self-surrender and prayerfulness God will call you to growth. Forget yourself in God's providence.
- Let your greatest action be abandonment into God's will with gratitude for God's life in you; and let that action empower you to love others creatively and on their terms. Avoid the trap of making charity a self-centered project.
- Be patient and persevere in your willingness to be true to the Gospel and honest to your

own experiences. Be confident that Christ's Spirit of truth is enlightening you and empowering you into your true self.

- Be prudent, have boundaries, but don't return violence with violence. Make your spiritual penance the practice of accepting the necessary suffering of being a loving person. That will be more than enough asceticism for one lifetime.
- In any given situation you may not know how you will respond, but don't fuss about that; just know how not to respond. If you are willing to die daily, you will learn how to respond in nonviolent love.
- Repent, prepare, and be prudent but after doing what you can do, don't fret about past failures or future difficulties. In that way live in the present moment and you will be able to accomplish what God wants of you.

Actually Thérèse would hardly say that much; she would probably say simply something like this: You are in God's love; Christ's Spirit is active in you, let that be enough.

Reflecting on her own spiritual growth, Thérèse lamented that the lack of a good spiritual director has hindered the growth of many in the spiritual life. Perhaps, God's providence has given Thérèse to us as the spiritual director we need in our day, the contemporary Doctor of the Church who teaches us about God's love and gives us the Little Way of love without violence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brother Joseph F. Schmidt, FSC, a De La Salle Christian Brother, is a spiritual director, counselor, author and retreat presenter. He had been for many years on the staff of Sangre de Cristo, an international sabbatical center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is recently returned from five years in ministry in Kenya teaching and giving retreats on Thérèse of Lisieux. He has authored *Praying Our Experiences*; *Praying with Thérèse of Lisieux*; *Everything is Grace: The Life and Way of Thérèse of Lisieux*; and *Walking the Little Way*.

IN MY OPINION



Some Reflections about the Franciscan Way of "Continuous Conversion"

Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi and Thérèse of Lisieux share the understanding that love is at the core of spiritual

growth. They came to know the Jesus who was sustained and guided by love and who shared love through the pain and joy, sacrifice and abundance, vulnerability and strength of his life and death.

Saints Francis and Clare came to know the mystery and humility of Jesus' incarnation as he entered our human reality. They grieved the completion of Jesus' life in his terrible death and rejoiced in his resurrection. They were attuned to the abundant love that is so abundantly given to us. For them, all of creation sang out the mutuality that is love. All, especially those who are poor, and even those trapped in evil, are sister

and brother, mother and spouse. All show forth the face of Jesus if we have eyes to see and hearts open to receive. This awareness is embedded in the Franciscan call to "live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility."

The Franciscan call to continuous conversion is an invitation to a change of mind and a letting go of all that blocks us from the wellspring of life that is Christ within us. Francis and Clare model the giving over of attachments, personal, material, and spiritual, so as to open one's self to the goodness, love and wisdom that God was waiting to give us. Continuous conversion invites us to move beyond our sinfulness and limitations to knowing that we, like Jesus, bring pleasure to God. We come to know ourselves as one beloved, sought after and open to Spirit.

We could all identify moments in our lives that are life changing. Early in my Franciscan journey, I was confronted in prayer with the reality that the person God had created was well hidden beneath my self-created false identity. That profound conversion experience was followed by years of dismantling attachments and protective coverings in order to trust the person God had created.

**"live this evangelical conversion of life
in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility."**

Sometime later, when praying over 1 Cor.13: 1 – 13, I heard, and truly registered that this is the way God loves me/us/all people! God's love is patient and kind, never selfish, not keeping score of wrongs, a love that has limitless mercy, faith and hope. It is because we are loved so much, even in our limitations and inadequacies, that we are invited and enabled to love in this same way. Continuous conversion involves the skill of self-awareness and the willingness to name our truth. It is not something we plan, but rather is a gift from God. Making ourselves accessible to God, we are ready to receive God as God comes in prayer and in the persons and events that make up our lives. "[Prayer] opens us to trust that Spirit enters into this world – we do not break into its world. God is always present – we are the ones invited to open ourselves to receive and to act from our deepest identity as one beloved of and precious to God".

Continuous conversion can sound complicated and difficult, but the reality is that it is a day-to-day unfolding and opening of self to the compassion, mercy and love of our God. The

author, Joe Schmidt's, suggestion of what Thérèse would say to us today captures the simplicity and daily-ness of living one's life with love. Francis and Clare would agree with the wisdom he suggests in Thérèse's final statement, "You are in God's love; Christ's Spirit is active in you, let that be enough."

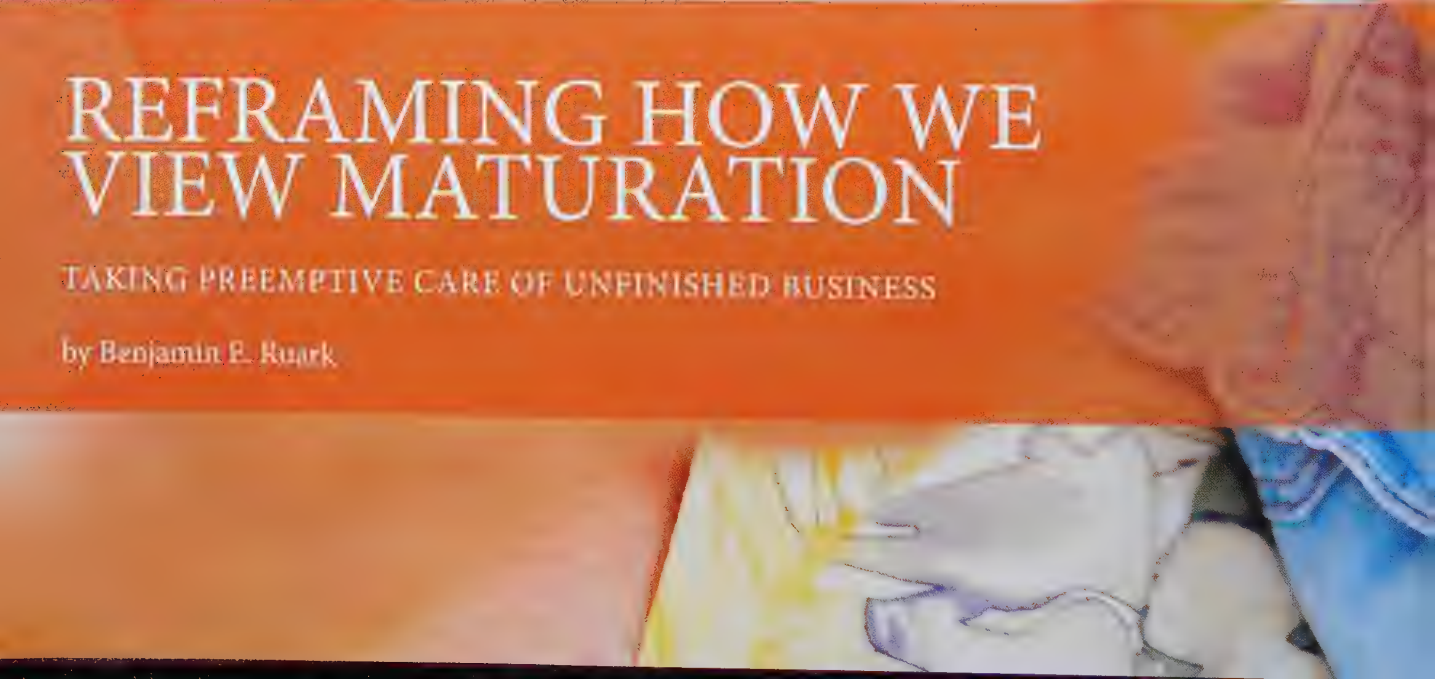
Beatrice Eichten, OSF serves as Community Minister/President for the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, MN. She has a background in pastoral counseling, group dynamics, healthcare sponsorship, and planning.



REFRAMING HOW WE VIEW MATURATION

TAKING PREEMPTIVE CARE OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS

by Benjamin F. Ruark





ABSTRACT

This theoretical work discusses a number of significant knowledge and skill gaps, perpetuated by American society, which signify omissions in human maturation both at the granular (individual) level, and as societal barriers to human maturation at the macro (collective) level. Evolutionarily, *Homo sapiens Americanus*, if you will, is standing still—stuck in an outmoded, preconceived notion of what maturity is and the attainment of it. As advancement in many technologies continues to flourish at accelerated rates, the same cannot be said about individual character and the legacy *Americanus* leaves behind for future progeny to emulate. Therefore, changes are proposed for replacing the current, longstanding maturation paradigm; along with requisite changes in parenting, schooling, and other societal factors believed to nurture and shape individual life trajectories.

INTRODUCTION

Humans have a generally longer gestation than many of their relatives in the Hominidae family. We differ greatest in nurture-time devoted toward helping our offspring reach maturity and self-sufficiency. In fact, human maturation time is advantageously prolonged. With newborn brain size being only about one-fourth to one-third that of adult size, natural selection favored a human fetus developmentally incomplete enough to accommodate later species adaptation to bipedalism, due to width restrictions that capability put on the birth canal. Consequently, the human brain would continue to grow in size and mature outside the womb, attaining full maturity in both genders at about age twenty-five.

By evolutionary design, then, we come into this world unfinished. Radically incomplete; anatomically and neurologically unhurried in our developmental trek. We have all heard or read how this condition paved the way for early humans to unite as a family; how it enabled an enlarged brain to develop higher intellect; how it ostensibly fostered a means of better communicating. And as family ties expanded, the passing to future generations of honed survival tactics and tool-making was but a short leap-of-faith by primitive culture to derive survival benefit through strength-in-numbers. It would be fair to conclude that the dependency of 'unfinished' newborns opened many windows-of-opportunity for our species to evolve. Similarly, we can think of the nurture-maturation interval (hereafter simply termed, maturation), as unfinished business that through family and social bonds nature has entrusted us to help complete with each new member's arrival.

Scholars appear to share a belief that incompleteness in human infants is indeed the keystone of our evolutionary prowess: as infants we bring to the external world an 'open intelligence' (Pearce, 1986) that leaves us ready to actively explore, learn how to control, and work through diverse situations rife with opportunity to develop a budding logic. Put another way: the flipside of being unfinished is that we're uniquely designed to be robustly potential; each newborn is a veritable reservoir of possibility awaiting nurtured

development and self-discovery of their varied capabilities. In simpler times, the 'finishing' process of nurturance and maturation went mainly without a hitch.

Grandparents shared anecdotal tales of wisdom about lessons learned. At least one stay-at-home parent or guardian was there to help with homework and shape a young mind. The predominant culture in most schools still bore the countenance of the teaching staff. Maturity generally got 'finished' with fewer societal hurdles to clear, and a lesser barrage of pressures on a maturing psyche and emotional pupillage. Parents, schools, and culture were far from perfect; but each of their contributing forces were likeminded in purpose: united in steering maturing youth toward the same model or vision of 20th Century adulthood. But collective like-mindedness began to dissolve with the advents of the nuclear family, two-working parents, and student-led school subcultures. Filling a nurturance vacuum, there arose greater student reliance on peer-to-peer emotional support and cognitive guidance. Also, soon to prosper was a TV-spun pop culture awareness about how the modern world (stereotypically) works; a world that readily casts off attention on personal growth in favor of glib ways of looking and acting pop culture 'cool' and 'adult'. In step with technological advancements, many once-prized character traits and 'old fashioned' values were destined to go the way of landline telephones, typewriters, vinyl phonograph records, and broadcast TV.

Like reading a roadmap, when we better understand the destination a particular cue points us toward, we can choose to continue in that direction or intervene to avoid it in favor of a sensible alternative

The current vision or model of ‘adult’ is anachronistic. Despite current trends, modern-day youth need more, not less, nurturance to successfully attain adulthood with the right attributes and tools in place to live well and happily—not just survive and cope with what comes their way. In place of a timeworn paradigm the new one breaks from conventional thinking about individual freedoms, what’s elective and what’s compulsory in education, and the extent to which parents need to ratchet up their involvement—under changed roles—as their children approach puberty.

Through social media, the now-global reach of pop-culture whims and trappings is spreading with infectious fervor to other nations who desire the boundless freedoms ours and other democratic nations enjoy. What these aspirants of democracy do not pick up on is our neoteny: the retention of juvenile characteristics in adults. They do not fathom a cultural backdrop that has undergone social anamorphosis: an evolutionary increase in complexity of form and function; in short, our inconstant 21st Century existence, in which character gets tested in many ways, at many levels, across diverse social, business, and intimate relations, daily; any of which may seal a person’s fate and that of those who depend on them.

What follows, next, are numerous observations that lend weight to a proposal that we reframe how we view and facilitate maturation in youth.

Why We Need to Reframe Our View toward Maturation & How We Facilitate It

There exist many types of knowledge (know-what) and skills (know-how) that are revelatory of how (I) culture derails maturation at a macro level of collective human development, and (II) how lack of select knowledge/skills curtails individual maturation at the granular level of development.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS DERAILING DEVELOPMENTAL COMPLETION AT THE MACRO LEVEL

There are a passel of knowledge ‘potholes’ in our contemporary landscape that don’t appear to be getting filled anytime, soon. Moreover, this very landscape is rife with knowledge detours, popular-but-invalid shortcuts, poorly-signed wrong ways, and other maturity-derailing signage.

‘FITTING-IN’ ECLIPSES DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIVIDUAL’S AUTONOMY

Popular culture and numerous subcultures have erected so many enticements for seeking membership that they derail personal growth toward independence and self-sufficiency. A personal journey that is meant to be about deep reflection and self-discovery of possibility gets nosed out by one more flashily promoted, prescribed, and readily adoptable at-face-value from numerous mechanisms and agents within popular culture. Alluring images of material success, being in command of instant gratification—coupled with flattering, stereotypic vignettes of what ‘acting adult’ looks like, today—have inundated TV and movie drama, as well as book and magazine fiction, with irremissible thoughtlessness. Somehow the irony of double entendre gets missed when the popular culture models trendy examples of ‘being your own person’ for impressionable others to imitate.

PIED PIPER OF CANNED REALITY

Through social media, TV, the cinema, formal and informal instruction, and other apparatus, mainstream and pop culture transmit prepackaged knowledge about relevant cues and attending behavior for all sorts of life encounters. Instead of shaping and testing their own reality, young and old minds alike are encouraged by pop culture ploys to subscribe to a reality that is predefined, programmed, and ready for aping as scripted. Little serious thought is

required; self-inquiry, testing the feel of new concepts, rehearsing how they play out—all of that is superfluous. Examples of aping canned-reality from pop culture's multichannel network include: (a) dating behavior, being romantic, and fleecy definitions of being 'in love'; (b) serious face-to-face interaction yielding quality time to assorted Internet and social media stand-ins; (c) getting instant 'answers' to complex life issues from talk-show gurus, and mistaking this newfound awareness for directly relevant readily implementable know-how. Personal experience, feedback, self-reflection, mentored guidance, and personal growth cannot be substituted by vicariously-learned, large-as-life plasma-screen examples of other people's life experiences. Vicarious learning helps us with what to do or avoid doing, based on observed consequences; it is not an expressway to transformation, transcendence, and mature growth. Those have to be navigated in real time for as long as it individually takes.

FREQUENT FORAYS INTO EXCESS

Especially for youth and young adults, culture sends countless bold, foolhardy, and subliminal messages which imply our constitutional freedom entitles us to explore in excess whatever next interests us; and clearly there is no shortage of endorsements from nationally recognized celebrities to fuel that incentive. Consequences be damned, advertisement and clever modeling signal it is okay, the 'in thing,' and even gainful in exhilarating ways to pursue in excess culturally popular inducements instead of sampling life in moderation. Some examples of carrying neotenus impulses to extremes are: (a) shopping sprees as a form of stress-therapy or leisure-time recreation; (b) career-driven antics that far outdistance one's own health and family priorities; (c) excessive forms of indulgence leading to dependency/addiction to alcohol/drugs/sex/chain-smoking/gambling/Internet



surfing/binge eating, etc.; (d) Black Friday (bleeding into Thanksgiving Day) madcap, discount shopping-frenzies; (e) frequent flights to voyeuristic destinations in reality-TV, seedy talk-shows, select social media, and tabloid journalism; (f) pursuing daredevil feats in sports, or with sports apparatus, to generate a thrill, win peer approval, and 'prove some-thing' as yet undefined; and, finally, (g) insatiable viewing of violence at the cinema, on TV, from video games and DVDs.

ENLIGHTENMENT FAILS TO MIGRATE FROM ISOLATED ISLANDS OF CONTEMPORARY KNOW-HOW

It is vexing to witness compelling demonstrations of know-how that attest to a better way of functioning—able to deliver palpable widespread advantage—



yet these isles of special know-how only populate isolated sectors of mainstream society. Insult piggybacking on injury, the ineptitude of many extant forms of human functioning parades daily before our eyes, as though progress, species-wide, refuses measurement by quinquennium, or even by decades or centuries, but rather by severely lethargic increments of geologic time.

EXAMPLES OF GRASSROOTS-LEVEL IGNORANCE THAT A BETTER-WAY EXISTS ARE:

1. Articulate Speaking & Active Listening
– For starters, consider those synaptic fill-ins that get overused to the point of garbled, incoherent utterances: ‘um’, ‘I mean’, ‘like’, and ‘you know’. The listening side of inarticulate communication refers to a prominent

set of everyday ‘communication skills’ that are passable when used sparingly; however, they get used excessively and ubiquitously inhabit all corners of mainstream society to a caustic end of deafening most people’s ability to really listen. They were, and continue to be, handed down generation to generation through parents, teachers, media, and so on. Common sense erring yet again, these skills are inadequate to the purposes that drive their use: for when used in excess, and when erroneously applied at inopportune moments and to inappropriate situations, they rapidly erect detrimental roadblocks to achieving the very purpose that evoked them. For a complete list and additional explanation, search Thomas Gordon’s roadblocks to communication (1973) on the Internet.

2. Critical Thinking-Reasoning – A deluge of reasoning-deprivation examples could be cited, but will be limited to two unobtrusive measures: (i) at any suburban ER unit review a week’s worth of injuries and how they were caused; (ii) or view a dozen episodes of ‘America’s Funniest Home Videos’ and puzzle out their common denominator. (iii) Fundamental ABCs of Making Choices & Orientation to Other-Awareness – With every passing minute on the clock an untold number of persons needlessly reencounter undesirable consequences for established patterns of behavior they are capable of rectifying if given the right tools. This unfortunate leitmotif plagues persons of all economic and educational backgrounds. ‘ABC’ stands for antecedent-behavior-consequences: A-B-C chains represent predictable patterns of how we react to external (environmental) and internal (thinking/ affective) cues. Like reading a roadmap, when we better understand the destination a particular cue points us toward, we can choose to continue in



that direction or intervene to avoid it in favor of a sensible alternative. By extension, A-B-C mindedness is not just about how we affect our own lives; it speaks to a predisposition to practice 'other awareness' so that were also mindful of how our actions do, or potentially can, positively or adversely affect others. Other-unawareness is the root cause of many, many kinds of misunderstandings that escalate into harm and suffering: neighbor disputes, road rage, vandalism, harassment, insensitive remarks that humiliate, etc.

Lamentably, some of these untapped islands of contemporary know-how will undoubtedly be viewed by less-imaginative readers as either passé or unrealistic nonstarters. To those naysayers I say their imaginings fail to envision a minus column on the Human Conduct Ledger, where tens—or perhaps hundreds—of millions of teachable moments likely go unnoticed, certainly go untapped, each day,

nationwide. Yet a higher plane of human functioning would estimably reduce the numbers in that corpulent minus column, for sure.

PROCESS-ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

Across many personal and business circles, over-attention to content either misses altogether, or dismisses out of hand, real and potentially meaningful 'statements' being made by some ongoing process. The discussion could be a tête-à-tête, or business meeting, or a classroom debate; a seminar lecture, a couple reciting the wedding vows, a State of the Union addresses: virtually any interaction between two or more people carries this second layer of communication. The process side of interaction points explicitly at how participants contribute to that process; how they interact, decide, share, and add versus subtract information of value, forward direction, and momentum to the content and process underway. Careening inside an ever-superseding, churning of content is where the poignant underlying assumptions get glossed over; where fleeting innuendo, subtext, and various tells in others' demeanor go unchallenged, unresolved. Significant competing agendas may be in progress—visible if looked for; and no one brings them to the surface. The more obvious process issues occur when content focus gets derailed by going off-point, disrupting the emotional climate, 'spinning wheels', getting irretrievably sidetracked, losing objectivity, and so on. Unresolved process issues are tantamount to an unspoken, carelessly edited-down interaction event; an abridged, markedly distorted version of what actually transpired. From such illusory roots sprout the weeds of misinterpretation, uncertainty, false sense of direction, covertly criticized but nonetheless overtly-decided goals, etc. What could have been is an unknown that time snaps up and quietly ushers into recent past.

PERVASIVE AND NOXIOUS AS SECOND-HAND SMOKE: LOOSE POP CULTURE MORALITY & INTEGRITY

From all compass points and every imaginable outlet—news media, TV and motion pictures, book fiction and nonfiction, the Internet, the tabloids, magazines, etc.—we are continually benumbed by sometimes humorous, sometimes gloomy, and sometimes even celebrated bad examples of morality and personal integrity. In instances where entertainment and curiosity value figure in the equation, a media-clad pop culture is quick to forgive many types of moral blunders capable of triggering larger viewership and higher subscriber ratings.

Miasmatic signs of a nationally-sapped integrity can be observed from sunrise to sundown: we are greeted by Internet scams when opening our morning e-mail; we commit traffic infractions along our work and school commutes, earning us rude gestures and the threat of road rage looming one or two car-lengths behind; hackers infiltrate our IT systems at work, injecting new, costly viruses while fellow employees watch Internet porn on company time; employers vehemently drum the message of playing along—i.e., lie to, deceive, or otherwise exploit customers—in order to get along (keep paychecks coming); telemarketers interrupt the dinner hour with surveys, sales pitches, and ploys to extract money; primetime TV news segments announce the latest icon(s) to fall from grace in: college and professional sports, Wall Street finance, in the entertainment field, at some key governmental agency, in national politics, at a once-prestigious military academy or highly-decorated military unit; of powerful corporate executives blatantly doing the unforgiveable with conceited impunity; or worse, some religious cleric committing the unthinkable. At the national level the term, role model, is an iffy proposition at best, no matter its mediagenic star-power

in these jaded times; where on any street corner gets snorted the blasé mantra ‘it’s only wrong if you get caught’.

ANCHORLESS AGAINST A STRONG CURRENT: ABSENCE OF A HIGHER PHILOSOPHICAL/SPIRITUAL PURPOSE

Whether through quiet introspection or in dialogue with a confidant, many people express a need to be anchored to something that gives meaning and purpose to their existence. The origin of that need may be spiritual fulfillment, a vocational calling, a humanitarian mission, or some other cause emblematic of putting their trust in a philosophy whose circumference is larger than their personal sphere to evade anomie or avoid going astray. But equally in vogue, and for numerous reasons, many resist focusing inward to develop that inner reserve of strength from which they can draw during difficult moments. Instead, they turn outward, inured to cherry-picking from one of culture’s latest crazes of some self-aggrandizing 10-step program promoting personal growth.

Culture is fine for camaraderie and sense of belonging, and as a rich source for knowledge handed down to future generations. But pop culture, especially, merits no authority to invoke higher purposes; not when its fickle buffet of external anchors *du jure* changes in step with marketing trends; and when the selling points behind each tantalizing offering are less about wellbeing and personal direction and more about commercial value. In moments of crisis, and during one of life’s unforeseen tests of character, holding fast to some extrinsic anchor may reveal too thin a reserve to go the distance. It may spend itself, lose all of its diversionary appeal; becoming depleted before some personal life difficulty is even close to being resolved. Development and maturation are about signing up for the long haul. No shortcuts allowed.

HOW LACK OF CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS CURTAILS INDIVIDUAL MATURATION AT THE GRANULAR LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Already briefly alluded to, the next three points of clarification warrant added focus at the individual level of curtailed development because they represent significant gaps in how we prepare nascent youth of today.

REFLEXIVE LISTENING TO A NATIONAL FAULT

In personal and business communications a sizeable number of people continue to lumber along, mistakenly believing they are listening to others when, in truth, they are passively waiting for a familiar cue, theme, or concept to be spoken that they can both relate and react to: they are filtering the content of what they hear (or what they want to hear), rather than being actively engaged in the listening process. Passive listening is a primitive hand-me-down to succeeding generations, a byproduct of learning one's native language; focus is so content-centric that telltale listener responses may easily prove feeble, off-target, ill-timed, inadequate, incendiary, etc. For occasions of small talk, and other impersonal dialogue, passive listening is adequate. But for personal interaction, listening informs and rewards the active participant; a list of active listening skills can be retrieved on the Web. Empathy—in tandem with active listening—means identifying and trying to understand another person's situation, feelings and motives to the extent that the listener arrives at the same destination of meaning as the speaker's; that the listener somewhat tangibly senses what the speaker has experienced to arrive at their meaning.

So, with less emphasis on passive listening's traditional roadblocks to communication, instead, today's children could be learning their native language, now buttressed by basic use of empathy and active

listening. By their high school years their relationship skills would likely be superior to those of their elders—assuming parents are on the same page at home.

BELEATEDLY LEARNING THE ABC'S OF MAKING CHOICES THE HARD WAY: FROM MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

Akin to teaching people to fish so they can fend for themselves, children could learn early on to discern their own patterns of behavior, the telltale antecedents that precede key predictable behaviors—positive and harmful—and the kinds of immediate, middle, and long term consequences that expectedly ensue: the ABCs of making choices. Instead of waiting until socially learned trouble spots reach a point of requiring societal intervention, all children could benefit if teachers and parents were trained to educate youth on how patterns of self-behavior get established and can be preemptively managed with a few tools in hand. Schools would need to include mental health courses as part of the health education curriculum. Advanced versions need repeating across the span of children's education to leverage a majority of budding adults that will better understand the depth of the choices they are about to make; the consequential trajectories likely, and afford them greater pause to seriously ponder viability of alternatives.

It is entirely feasible to set up conditions for young minds to better understand how other people, personal thoughts, self-talk, and recurring emotions associate with behaviors that lead to constructive versus destructive emotions; or that set up optimistic versus fatalistic expectations, which then strengthen the likelihood of repeating a given desirable or undesirable behavior, respectively, and its unraveling swath of short through long-range outcomes. With the right knowledge and a few self-intervening recourses in hand, young people would better embrace ownership of their actions and how to



take responsibility. They then learn to confront—instead of succumbing to being mired in—life's unruly tangle of complexities. They are less prone to be 'left in the dark': that having legally reached adulthood, find themselves brooding because of self-ignorance and uneducated guesswork at why things happen or don't happen as they had hoped and fantasized.

CRITICAL SHORTFALL IN OTHER- & META-AWARENESS: AN EPIDEMIC OF THE MUTED KIND

As social creatures it is patently dismal to witness the number of ways people commit all manner of affronts against one another. Despite any presupposed lasting effects from parental boundaries that were drawn during the formative years, a weighty majority of us fail to broaden the personal sphere of our needs and wants-driven actions to include those persons we are likely to impact. Because the proverbial bull in the china shop has an abundance of company: we overzealously defend our exaggerated rights in the much-offended face of social harmony, every day, in various forms of discourteous conduct in movie theaters, in traffic, in apartment

and condominium living, at work, when commuting by bus/subway/train, in commercial flight, at sports events, and so on. Yet prime-time and cable news are surfeit to treat us with a steady diet of yet another trifling display of public insolence exceeding someone's breaking point and detonating into more violence and human misery.

As used, here, being other-aware means being vigilant of the 'immediate periphery' of one's actions; of adjusting those actions in a way that respects the rights, sensibilities, and personal space of people in close proximity. This vigilance extends to people who are unseen, but presumably close by, within reach of consequences generated by one's actions: the neighbor who is within earshot, a motorist in an adjacent lane, the people in front of and behind you in a long queue, and so on. Other-awareness is about proximal vigilance overlearned to the point of becoming second nature.

By extension, awareness also has a distal quality, what might be called meta-awareness: the pursuit of a best possible end-view for all. This represents a further



break from insular thinking. It endorses our being 'us inclusive' in life situations where our intended actions have real or potentially serious consequences for others. Where what we aim to do will have a definite favorable or adverse, lasting impact on them. Therefore, the best possible end-view in these kinds of situations is one that (a) integrates others' viewpoints and concerns, and strives to (b) make a decision that reflects the best fashioned outcome for all that prudence will allow. This idea is hardly new: it was first introduced by David Seabury in his book, *The Art of Selfishness* (1990). As meta-aware individuals, we put our intellectual wherewithal to work trying to attain—or at least approximate—outcomes that mutually satisfy; we are acting responsibly, solving a complex problem, applying empathy, and deciding farsightedly. As 21st Century smart-tool users, we are then interfacing in smarter ways with each other, not just with the tools that we create.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT HUMAN MATURATION & IMPLICATIONS FOR FACILITATING IT

With regard to human maturation, we do not complete what we started; parents prematurely wind down on child nurturance when, instead, a recharging of their (hopefully evolved) roles and relationships with their children would better serve. Maturation needs to be formally viewed as a longer, not shorter, nurturance interval. Concurrently, nurturing requires a more robust school curriculum, beginning as early as elementary school and continuing through undergraduate college years; and with that, a wide variety of new and refurbished delivery mechanisms—as illustrated in Table 1.

There exists at the national level a failure to make the leap-of-faith that a heavier, lengthier investment in nurturing maturation in our youth will reap

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| ▪ Active listening-empathy classes mimic methods used to teach a foreign language | ▪ Child development-centered retreats/treks/vacations | ▪ Graduated reasoning and relating proficiency levels based on educational level |
| ▪ Homework assignments | ▪ Incentive/reward systems | ▪ Interactive games and videos with scenario-based exercises |
| ▪ Internships, field studies | ▪ Metaphorical exercises/journeys | ▪ Parenting booster clinics for nurturing preteens and teens |
| ▪ Peer-to-peer teaching and coaching | ▪ Psychological interventions designed to teach an object lesson (abstract into concrete) | ▪ Publications supporting extended nurturing |
| ▪ Reinvented extended families (parents + significant others + NGOs) | ▪ Talent fairs: art, ecology, music, reasoning, relating, science, theater, etc. | ▪ Training: camps, clinics, programs, seminars, tutoring, videos, and workshops |
| ▪ Youth mentoring services; youth-led conferences and special consortiums | ▪ Youth produced, written, and directed documentaries | ▪ Youth apply special talents in volunteer projects |

Table 1: Sample of Delivery Mechanisms

exponentially greater dividends for their's and future generations: at present, we neither proficiently nor robustly outfit today's youth to attain a new standard of functioning in the 21st Century.

Mainstream and pop culture exert powerful influences that can effortlessly overtake and derail parental efforts to guide and inspire the direction, priorities, and character development of their progeny. Insidious of various media, popular culture has reached a point of usurping nurturance content and processes, and in so doing, stunting the developmental cycle of youth too eager to assimilate into its incondite, flashy trappings; and to impetuously follow its various enthralling bread crumb trails to the next facsimile of adulthood being propagated. In a word, culture has the lion's share of modern-day carrots.

Culture has become quite adept at dangling shinier, more interesting, instantly-gratifying carrots before kids' dazzled eyes. Against that foreground, parents and schools and youth organizations are trying hard but only producing sparsely successful results in convincing youth not to spuriously 'grow up' overnight. In order to successfully compete with storybook narratives of 'being adult', those entrusted with nurturing the development of youth need to make sweeping changes in how they view and relate to youth. A good start is to shift from doing to, to a parent-child working alliance of doing with/for. Insight-wise, both behaviorally and in outcomes thusly produced, those 'to' versus 'with/for' prepositions are light-years apart.

A few a priori assumptions need debunking: (1) that legal age and a GPA suitably define a person's maturity. Competency-based instruction of the whole child (mental health factors such as reasoning and relating included) has more teeth. School curricula expand to 5 Rs: the standard three plus reasoning/critical thinking and relating (empathy, active listening, ABCs of making choices,

and other-/meta-awareness); relating is the 21st century equivalent of our species sprouting an opposable thumb. (2) That elementary through high school teaching rightfully emphasizes teaching to children. Instead, each child's potential—his or her unique talents—should be given individual attention and made relevant to each of the five Rs. Since nature giftwraps each of us with uncharted promise, it is the charge of nurturers of every ilk to help chart and manifest that promise by doing with/for young learners. Curricula and instruction need to inspire discovery of personal potential; teachers need to be individual learner-driven to make every subject personally scintillating, at least partially relevant, and challenging in some way that gives every student a learning chance. (3) That large class size and grading on the curve are acceptable: by their very definition a win-lose line's been automatically drawn in the schoolyard sand. That sort of thinking can be traced to root beliefs and values about where society places and hedges its bets on young people as future assets or liabilities: as real and foretelling of some educators as any set of DNA nucleotides.

So the open-ended question to close with—that won't go away—is this: how do we unwaveringly commit to a leap of faith in something not immediately visible—in children who will hereafter be more advanced than all predecessors? How do you invoke a new age of nurturance where every child is ubiquitously believed to be gifted; is habitually encouraged, generously allocated one-on-one time, and instructionally-plotted to win within his or her positively-shaped reality? Where we don't think or suspect that; we know that. And how we act is reflective of that.

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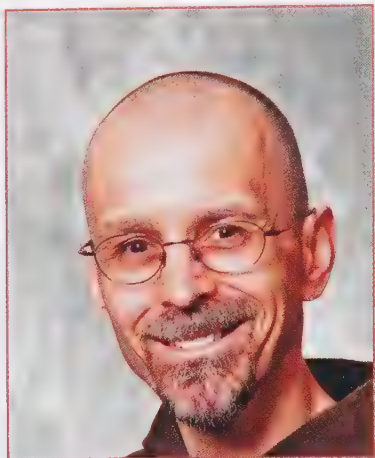
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Benjamin E. Ruark is a former senior curriculum designer and performance improvement advisor. His first career was as an associate in behavior therapy. He then earned a second masters in curriculum & instruction, working both sides of the corporate fence as internal and external consultant on curriculum design, performance engineering, and continuous quality improvement. Mr. Ruark's eclectic interests have seen publication on a range of subjects, including evidence-based practice for training professionals, on violence in American society, on quality in both manufacturing and service sectors, and on promoting a 'spare' technology that emphasizes smarter consumption of energy and other utilities.

IN MY OPINION



The “Unfinished Business” of Initial and Continuing Formation

Benjamin Ruark’s essay, “Reframing How We View and Facilitate Human Maturation: Taking Preemptive Care of Unfinished

Business,” resonated with my twelve years of experience in provincial leadership and my more recent experiences in initial formation. He provided a good summary of some of the challenges that young people, including candidates for religious life and the priesthood, face in the process of becoming well-integrated adults.

These challenges, however, are not new. The changes wrought by advances in technology and communications, evolving and often fragmenting family and social structures, increased suspicion and skepticism of institutions and authority, and the focuses on self, choice and consumption have been going on for generations. An apt symbol of the culmination of these changes is the smart phone, which facilitates human communication across a variety of media platforms, including the telephone call (sounds almost quaint), e-mail, text message, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Its apps are not only a reflection of one’s personal values and interests but can also serve as a filter against contrary ideas and opinions, even those that may be good and helpful to human growth and integration as well as democracy.

Adolescence has been extended not only by our culture but also by our economy. Youth unemployment and underemployment, for example, are high and wages and benefits are often low, ostensibly to enable businesses to remain competitive in an increasingly global market of goods and services.

The costs of higher education inhibit some students and their families from making that investment, and those who do often find themselves with a legacy of debt that hobbles and delays the traditional path to maturation that includes moving out of mom’s and dad’s house, getting married and having children who are themselves a blessing but also require further and substantial investment of emotional and spiritual energy, time and money.

Ruark notes that “modern day youth need more, not less nurturance to successfully attain adulthood with the right attributes and tools in place to live well and happily—not just survive and cope with what comes their way.” One of the buzzwords in religious formation today is “accompaniment.” The young men who are our candidates, postulants, novices and simply-professed friars often come to us with a paradoxical blend of self-confidence and insecurity; great facility with communications technology but more marginal interpersonal communications skills; and the ability and desire to display for the world mundane and even quite personal aspects of their lives while struggling with self-disclosure and intimacy. It is just as important to note, however, that because of the aforementioned social, cultural and economic evolution that has been happening over the decades, many of us who are older and perpetually professed members are also still quite “unfinished.” We, too, need to deepen our capacities for empathy, listening, self-disclosure and intimacy, etc. It is telling that there are few workshops these days for religious as well as business leaders about how to deal with conflicts and “difficult personalities” within organizations.

At a more fundamental human level, we must also accept the fact that we are never really “finished” adults. We remain ever in need of growth, change and conversion—pilgrims in a Church that is herself forever “on the way.” The milestone of perpetual profession and ontological change of ordination cannot change the existential realities of our humanity; and whether through clericalism or an aversion or resistance to continuing formation and education, we ignore it to our peril.

The Franciscan charism of fraternity is our privileged and chosen expression of accompaniment in both our initial and our continuing formation as Capuchins: although our roles may be different, we walk with each other. In the limited space that remains in this article, I would like to suggest two ways in which we can assist our younger brothers as well as ourselves in our process of maturation: (1) a greater emphasis and practice of silence, contemplation and meditation; and (2) a more mindful and practical commitment to the evangelical counsels.

We live in a “plugged in” world in which our access to and reliance upon electronic devices has become so widespread that scientists have noted that it is creating new neural pathways so powerful that we can experience symptoms of withdrawal similar to those of an alcoholic or drug addict when we are deprived of them. This dependency is similarly accompanied by symptoms like anxiety, the inability to concentrate, etc. Might there be a correlation between the explosion of telecommunications technology and media and an increase in the number of our younger members who are diagnosed with and often medicated for ADHD, anxiety and similar problems?

I am becoming increasingly aware of my own need to create the time and space to be “unplugged.” Retreat and days of recollection, as well as times for meditation and contemplation, are part of our pattern of daily life as friars. However, I wonder whether it might be time to reinstitute the practice of the “Grand Silence,” particularly with respect to our electronic devices, for example from 9 PM until after our morning communal liturgies.

As we continue the lifetime task of growing in our observance and integration of the evangelical counsels toward becoming more mature in Christ, we might also consider an expression of poverty in more deliberate decisions to limit the scope of our choices, especially in what we consume. This can be done in a variety of ways, including the purchase of “house” or generic over brand name products, looking for fair trade certification, or even deciding that we can live with three or four different kinds of cereal or snack

foods rather than seven or eight in our cupboards. In a culture that has almost deified self-expression and personal choice, we might renew our commitment to religious obedience as dialog that will in the end lead to submission to those whom we have elected and entrusted to serve as our leaders. These days the proverbial rubber most often seems to hit the road in the area of personnel, especially when a member is asked to leave the relative comfort of a current home and ministry for something new. This physical itinerancy requires a more profound rootedness in our common values and mission, as well as the kenotic commitment required of all disciples of Jesus.

Finally, in an era when the “hook-up” culture and not-so-coincidental prevalence of sexual assaults are being addressed on college campuses across the country and the Church continues to seek more effective ways to prevent and respond to sexual assaults by clergy and religious as well as deal with the pastoral challenges wrought by online pornography in homes and seminaries, we need to reaffirm our commitment to celibate chastity as rooted in a healthy and holy respect for God, others and self. Created in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1:26) and temples of the Spirit called to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), we enter into relationships and are called to serve God and God’s people with our whole selves. Celibacy can be a beautiful and powerful way to witness to that, but only if it is well-integrated.

We, like the reign of God, are “unfinished business.” But with God’s grace and a renewed commitment to fraternal accompaniment and the evangelical counsels, we can become more finished and more useful to God and for others.

Fr. John Celichowski, OFM Cap. is the Director of Post-Novitiate, Ministry and Continuing for the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, headquartered in Detroit. From 2008 to 2014 he served as Provincial Minister. Prior to being elected in June 2008, he served as Pastor of parishes in Milwaukee and Chicago and served two terms on the Provincial Council.



SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT AT MID-LIFE

By: Sister Yen K. Le, LHC

Carl Jung is known as a psychologist of religion and faith development. Jung studied many religions from all parts of the world including Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism. Jung's pantheistic approach to religion led him to the conclusion that life has a spiritual dimension and that life's journey is eventually to integrate conscious needs and desires with unconscious spiritual needs. Jung called this process "individuation" – integration of opposing forces in the psyche. Jung thought that most people began this integration process at about age 35; a mid-life time when one starts the journey of self-examination and integration of conscious and unconscious mind.

Carl Jung proposed three main things making up people's perception were conscious, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious. Jung theorized that the outward self, the conscious self, is only a small part of a person's psyche, whereas the unconscious or inner self forms the greater portion of the human psyche. The unconscious including mind, soul, and spirit is the deepest level of people internalizing past events and actual experiences with culture and with all those who have affected their development. It also contains their deepest longings.

People typically experience a mid-life crisis between the ages of 40 and 60. It is a normal part of the aging process and usually happens to people at some point during their mid-life. Most people will experience some form of emotional, psychological and physical transition during this time of life. This transition can make many people feel uncomfortable and cause them to make adjustments in the way they live; some seek counseling or psychotherapy for depression or for help sorting out conflicting emotions and thoughts. Still others react to mid-life turmoil by making major changes in their life which may include career change, divorce or, in the case of celibate religious, leaving religious life for secular life.

In extreme cases, people may even question their sexual orientation or identity as male or female. These life-changing decisions can be very damaging and bring about feelings of regret and guilt later in life.

Religious development is formed and reformed through actual human interactions and experience. According to Jung's psychology, the development of a mature rational (Freud's "ego") understanding of self and the conscious mind takes place before the age of forty, the first half of life. During this time people are more focused on the external world including education, relationships, work, achievements and their ability to cope with social, family, and work demands. Mid-life is the turning point moving from the "out" and "up" journey (up the hill) to the "in" and "down" journey—the second half of life (over the hill). It is a time of choices and decision-making, starting at mid-life juncture or "noon" time of life; a time of integrating memories of life experiences with unconscious needs and desires. It is also the time to develop the Self's true identity and discover the meaning of life, the inner resources (Helminski, 1991).

In terms of religious development, people at mid-life tend to become set in their ways: their religious practices, prayers, rituals and beliefs become comfortable and self-satisfying. For this reason, "mid-life" people tend to get "bogged down" with what they know best. They will resist new religious practices or liturgical changes which may be imposed upon them by the Church or religious authority. This is why middle-aged people are often the ones who will criticize or voice their opposition to new religious practices. It is not the case for young people because they are willing to learn and are open to adapt to new practices in the Church, community, or society. We can say the same for old people because they are more content with their own life and do not worry too much about new changes. They know that their time has passed and it is up to the young to make their mark in this world. So

the most "outspoken" group is often those who are in middle age.

This paper will focus on the population of male and female religious to see how mid-life crises influence their religious and spiritual development and vice versa. I also use the sharing of my religious friends in their mid-life to further discuss the challenges of religious developments and how to cope with challenges brought on by outward changes in language and rituals, lifestyles, ideas about male and female roles in the Church and even rules for religious communities, not to mention increased stress brought on by new responsibilities. I will conclude with some practical applications and suggestions in terms of conversion and discernment at midlife for religious.

CHALLENGES AT MID-LIFE:

Helminski (1991) reported that the majority of participants in his study on developmental transitions experienced mid-life crises (women: 68.5%; men: 48.2 %). Both men and women at mid-life were equally concerned about purpose and meaning of life. Women reported that they had less education but had greater participation in religious activities, and women were more interested in spirituality and social concerns; thus it came as no surprise when women scored higher than men on social responsibility activities. More surprising was the fact that more women than men experienced mid-life crises, and women dealt with it better than men. Helminski's research also confirmed that men at mid-life experienced significantly more emotional, biological and psychological transition issues. On the other hand, men who were more comfortable with their interpersonal relationships tended to report less mid-life crisis.

Research suggests there are two kinds of mid-life crisis: mid-life crazy in which people behave externally in a wild and crazy manner; and mid-life reassessment in which people find difficulty in life but try to internalize their experience by rethinking

their lives and their places in the world. Only 3-4% of participants reported they experienced mid-life crazy without the mid-life reassessment. Mid-life crisis brings about a "low sense of purpose in life and high sense of seeking purpose" (Helminski, 1991, p. 264). People with better education and low sense of autonomy tend to experience mid-life reassessment, whereas those low in open-mindedness tend to experience mid-life crazies.

Most religious entering mid-life have already made perpetual vows and priests usually have been ordained for 10 years or more. Like other people, religious men and women start to experience gradual physical decline such as graying hair, skin wrinkles and signs of reduction in physical performance. Mid-life is a transition time associated with more stress because of many changes. Brim (1976) noted that:

The hormone production levels are dropping, the head is balding, the sexual vigor is diminishing, the stress is unending, the children are leaving, the parents are dying, the job horizons are narrowing, the friends are having their first heart attacks; the past float by in a fog of hopes not realized, opportunities not grasped, women not bedded, potentials not fulfilled, and the future is a confrontation with one's own mortality (as cited in Helminski, 1991, p. 22)

Women experience menopause, which has both biological and psychological effects on women. It can lead to changes in self-image and in the way women care for others and themselves. Many studies have indicated that menopause is a transition that has a huge impact on the lives of women. Although women religious are not concerned themselves about fertility and reproduction, menopause still represents significant psychological and emotional changes brought on by hormonal changes. Adjusting to these changes can be just as difficult for religious women as for secular women. Men also experience physical and hormonal changes as they age, and emotional crises can lead

Mid-life crisis
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and high sense of
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to major shifts in life structures. Studzinski (1985) claimed that "People are sometimes horrified by what they see in themselves at mid-life. In the process of examining one's life, unconscious conflicts are activated. Unresolved emotional issues of earlier life stages can hold a person back from making important changes in his or her life structure" (p. 35). Therefore, recurring stress at mid-life leads to one's sense of separation and loss.

Mid-life typically brings on a new set of worries and stresses. Children may have moved on leaving parents with an "empty nest", and about this time elderly parents become a concern: both fear of losing them and concern about caring for them as they become sick or disabled. The death of parents or family members becomes significant isolating events in life. This is particularly true for religious who often live far away from family; thus, they often go back to see their parents on vacations because parents mean the most in their

lives. A parents' deaths can lead religious to a major reappraisal of one's view of the world, one's place in that world and one's relationship with others. As the mid-lifer spends more and more time taking care of their parents or elderly relatives, they become more aware of dying as a fact of life, more conscious of their own mortality and their susceptibility to illness. Numerous studies have shown that mid-life can be a time of depression and turbulence in life, a time of psychological waviness. Depression can result from ways in which people deal with pain and destructiveness in their life caused by guilt over broken relationships, a parent's death, disease, disability, or unemployment. In addition, as their physical health declines, people tend to see doctors more often; gradually they accept sickness as their portion in life. In short, mid-life is a time of shifting perspectives as biological and hormonal changes affect emotions; at the same time, human reason is trying to bring into balance their conscious desires with

People are sometimes horrified by what they see in themselves at mid-life.

their unconscious desire for meaning and purpose. Carl Jung referred to this process as “individuation”—the combining and resolution of opposites in the human psyche.

As for men and women in religious life, middle age is typically a time when new responsibilities are assigned in their religious order and in parishes. These new duties and responsibilities, when combined with other psychological and emotional changes that may be going on, can be a time of challenges and considerable stress. A 42-year-old Jesuit, Father Quyen Vu, S.J., shared with me his thoughts about the challenges of being a high school administrator:

According to Fr. Vu, his greatest challenge in administration was to deal with human beings. A school administrator starting his ministry at mid-life has been most challenged by getting others to follow instructions and encouraging them to prepare for the next steps in their lives. Teachers, like administrators, are also hitting mid-life and find difficulty adapting to changes. They are more or less “fixed in their own particular ways” and less “flexible” to changes. When asked to do something new, they view the request as being asked to change their lifestyle and habits. This aspect of his vocation is difficult because there is no magic formula to this. In helping people to find their identity, administrators need to remind themselves that they are also on the journey of self-discovery and finding meaning in their own lives (Vu, personal conversation and email, 2013).

At the same time, religious have to accept

that they are like other people with many limitations. They have to relinquish many of their former hopes and dreams because they are not able to accomplish the dreams of their youth. At this point, many religious (consciously or unconsciously) start to compare their lives to that of married people with family, children, career and a life which, by secular standards, can be considered more successful than their own lives. Religious men and women, like their secular counter-parts, have a natural desire to make a difference in the world, to see the results of their efforts. Faith, however, tells us that God does not always show us how God works in and through the work and prayers of God’s chosen sons and daughters. Mid-life people, secular and religious, learn to put their youthful dreams aside and accept the reality of their limitations. Then, they try to adjust their expectations or make use of their talents and abilities more.

Many people at mid-life find they are dissatisfied with themselves and with all that they are doing. Studzinski (1985) states, “Many have the sense of having reached the limits of life at what is only its midpoint. Boredom is often their lot. Reactions to this experience vary greatly with individuals, but many feel the need to strike out in a new direction” (p. 2). At mid-life, people gradually realize their focus of life is not so much on achievement, power, and ideals of getting ahead. This removal of focus can cause disorienting and confusion. Dante in the *Inferno* of the *Divine Comedy* (as cited in Studzinski, 1985, p. 15) describes,

*In the middle of the journey of our life
I came to myself within a dark wood
where the straight way was lost.*

As the second half of life gets underway, both men and women have a tendency to review their commitments made earlier in their lives, and sometimes they decide to end the old commitments and start new ones. For example, some religious decide to leave their religious order while others want to become priests at mid-life. Mid-life is the time when people tend to review and re-evaluate their past so that they can move on with a more realistic expectation for their future. Many people go through mid-life smoothly, whereas many others experience considerable upheaval, namely a mid-life crisis. In short, a mid-life transition is a process of considerable changes in human development.

People at mid-life often find themselves confronted with emptiness and meaninglessness. Studzinski (1985) states,

"When they experience internal upheaval in the middle of life, their first reaction is to disappear quietly from the scene in order to sort things out. Often, however, they feel constrained to stay with their current responsibilities. They may strive to cover the rupture which exists between what they do in a stable church and what they are thinking and feeling as persons who are suddenly adrift" (p. 3-4). In general, going through midlife crisis, people have a wide range of feelings and make the transition either smoothly or with sudden changes.

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT AT MIDLIFE:

Many researchers point out that as people enter mid-life, there is an increasing interest in spiritual growth and religious experience (Helminski, 1991). This interest in spirituality and religiousness is what Jung called the collective unconscious, the melding of conscious desires and interests with the unconscious desire for truth and meaning. This process is accompanied by a growing concern about the meaning and value of life and human authenticity. Challenges in a mid-life transition involve spiritual challenges too. In order to grow in spiritual life, it is necessary to accept one's self for who he/she is and be open to all aspects of life, to the sacred and mystery of God without judgment. Carl Jung's mid-life integration of opposites requires people to balance opposing polarities: young/old, masculine/feminine, separation/attachment, etc. (Studzinski, 1985). A healthy maturing of mind, body and spirit in mid-life integration leads people to accept responsibility for oneself and for others, and the strength of character to deal with conflict in the world.

If individuals at mid-life tend to avoid conflicts in their personal relationships because of feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, their mid-life transition will be more difficult. Feelings of fear, shame, and rejection will dominate and healthy individuation will not take place. Without



help from a counselor or a spiritual leader, these conflicted souls may try to run away from problems instead of solving them. Run-away behaviors may include divorce, sudden change of job, new addictive behaviors, and uncontrolled spending. Members of religious communities may express their mid-life crises by leaving their religious community.

While some may react to mid-life conflict by running away from their vows and responsibilities, others bring about great goodness for their communities and for the world. For example, St. Teresa of Avila reformed her religious convent during her mid-life. Saint Ignatius of Loyola also at mid-life made a decision to dedicate his life to God and the Church. His spiritual renewal was brought on by the experience of war and the conflicts of secular life. Thus, mid-life crises can result in either personal disintegration or fulfillment of our deepest spiritual desires and transformation of the world around us. Religious transition at mid-life refers to the experience of darkness, such as a crisis about the meaning and purpose of life, depression, and loneliness. Darkness means not only negative aspects of low experience, but also anything preventing people from pursuing positive features of their life experience. For Saint John of the Cross: the dark night of the soul was a time to purify and test the depths of faith despite darkness, loneliness, and feelings of hopelessness. Truly, the act of faith encourages people to go out of one's self and place one's trust in the invisible God.

Edith Stein described the dark night of Saint John of the Cross, "the dark night falls over people, it is formless and invisible, it swallows them and everything around them. They experience a sense of being paralyzed, as well as blindness. The night is threatening. It presents people with a foretaste of death. The dark night affects them both inwardly and outwardly" (as cited in Studzinski, 1985, p. 16). The dark night also brings about a comforting sense, peace and quiet, which has an impact on people's psychological and spiritual fields.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola also at mid-life made a decision to dedicate his life to God and the Church.

A mid-life transition is the turning point in an individual's journey into the autumn of their lives. Studzinski (1985) describes a mid-life transition as the time "one left one's homeland and risks life and fortune to reach another place, not because that place was better than the homeland, but because one felt an interior call to make the journey" (p. 17). The journey of conversion affects the whole person spiritually. The journey to search for a fuller life is to accept one's self more and more and even the less attractive aspects that a person just wants to ignore or put in the unconscious. The movement toward a fuller acceptance of one's whole self draws people to a closer relationship with God. This is a journey toward union with God, the integration between the unconscious and the conscious in which the whole person is absorbed in God. A person becomes fuller and more mature if that person is nurtured by a spiritual/religious life. If people make efforts to confront their darker side, mid-life individuation can be an opportunity for growth as they are able to integrate the opposing demands and divisions present inside them.

Studzinski (1985) states: "To accept the diverse tendencies within oneself can be a frightening and overwhelming experience. People find themselves profoundly unsettled and desperately wanting to cling to their former visions of themselves" (p. 20). As for me, going through mid-life crisis is like the image of the dying and rising of Christ: a painful experience but with hope and meaning for one's life. For Jesus, the way to resurrected life was through acceptance of death. At mid-life, if people are continuously successful in letting go of what is precious in their lives and willing to accept many small deaths in their daily life, they will experience personal growth. The act of faith is the commitment of a person's whole self to the living God. People at mid-life can reach a new level of maturity and intensity once they are willing to confront the reality of their own death.





At mid-life, people try to reevaluate their relationship with God, with self, work, places, sickness and dying and try to find meaning in their daily activities and relationships. Mid-lifers often have to help parents cope with the loss of family members and friends. As parents and relatives get older, they experience role reversals, from being caregivers and supervisors to being cared for and supervised by others. By participating in these life processes, the mid-lifer develops a sense of caring and loving for their elderly parents and relatives and starts to realize they too will one day need care in their own old age. Accepting the death of parents is a crucial part of mid-life mourning. The mourning process can take longer or shorter depending on individuals. The death of a parent can be a transforming experience for a mid-lifer; the memory of the parent becomes internalized as they try to keep them alive within themselves in hope and faith. Enriched by internal growth, mid-lifers also develop a care and concern for their younger siblings and those in need.

In his dissertation on the impact of life events and developmental transition of people at mid-life who decide to become priests, Helminski (1991) points out that mid-life is the transition time when individuals experience changes in physical health, relationships, and career choice. Helminski reported in his dissertation that the desire and decision to become a priest at mid-life usually resulted from ongoing positive religious experiences. Most participants in the study indicated that their religious development in adult life grew out of their religious experiences in childhood.

Helminski's research shows that middle-age people spend more time in prayer, attend more religious activities and are more aware of the presence of God in their lives. All participants in the study reported that religion was an important part of their mid-life experience. Frequent religious experiences had a big influence on their vocational choice. Such mid-life career

changes are a significant indication of psychosocial development for mid-life males. The death of a significant other at mid-life was an important factor in the choice to become a priest.

Ryan's 2006 study explored the experience of five former nuns who left their communities at mid-life (38-55 years). Rarely did they speak about their life in a convent, and not many people asked them about those times. Most of them had graduate degrees, either a Masters or a PhD degree. The study indicated the psychological development of the five former nuns was not very appropriate. They made efforts to suppress their voice and disavow their authentic selves in order to preserve their relationship with their superiors and other members in their congregation. Another reason for leaving the convent was the motivation for their original decision to choose religious life in the first place. They each saw religious life as an alternative to married life because, at that time, religious life offered more freedom and more opportunity to pursue a college education. With advanced degrees and professional roles open to them, as opposed to motherhood and married life, they chose to become "brides of Christ," forerunners in feminine movement. Their decisions to leave convent life were partly because their desire to become a religious was not rooted in the love of God, a deep prayer life, and joy in service to others. Finally, it can be said that many religious began to question the value and purpose of their religious vocation in the years following Vatican Council II.

Women's spiritual growth is developed mainly in relationships, not only with their God but with their community members. A woman's spiritual journey is a discovery of one's authentic self, a time for intuitive and relational process with a sense of self-awakening. Ryan also noted that, "The lack of time to engage in solitude was one of the most significant disappointments of religious life" (p. 167). The glory of God is the person fully alive, the model of spirituality. Life is about trying to be alive. Ryan's study also

indicated that sisters often left their convents because they were not able to engage in positions that they were trained for in graduate schools. Lack of social support from religious administrators and other sisters led to isolation and growing frustration with community life. Other sisters reported that they did not have enough time for personal reflection because of a hectic life with teaching and school administration. Younger sisters felt overwhelmed because they were asked to teach with little or no preparation in teaching skills, but had to teach many different classes. Ill-equipped teaching capacity made the sisters question their superior on how to keep a balance between their ability and their ministry. One sister felt frustrated because she was not able to go home for the funeral of her family member. In general, these former nuns left the convent because they had many internal conflicts, fears and anxiety, and lack of adequate mentoring. Lack of sympathy and support from other sisters and administrators in the community drove some sisters to look for relationships outside the convent. For example, one sister reported that she fell in love with a man working with her and she decided to leave the convent. Those different circumstances created stresses which led some sisters to question the value of their vocation. Without adequate opportunities for quiet reflection and trained spiritual directors to guide and nurture their spiritual growth, these good women were unable to integrate the desires of their heart with the conflicting demands of community life and teaching careers.

Authentic spiritual life cannot separate life of the spirit from life of the physical body and human psyche. As Carl Jung pointed out, integration (individuation) of conscious and unconscious desires is necessary for responsible and mature living. People are relational and have a natural need to be in touch with others. For religious men and women, the need for silence and prayer must be balanced with the need for community of friends.

Turmoil and turbulence in mid-life can lead people to a conversion in which they see more clearly the spiritual qualities of others. Conversion puts people more in touch with themselves and with the world. Studzinski (1985) states, "A mid-life transition provides an opportunity for a person to move closer to the truth about himself or herself. Truth is the domain of the Spirit, and it is there that freedom is found" (p. 52).

Studies show that women experience spiritual growth through connections in relationships. Spirituality is a process of human development. For women religious, growth in spirituality is embedded in their relationship to God and to poor or marginalized people. People with good spiritual support and spiritual openness tend to achieve more satisfaction in life. Thus, mature spiritual orientation with a mature adaptive style helps women religious achieve a more positive outlook on life.

HOW TO COPE WITH CHALLENGES AT MID-LIFE?

There are different ways to assist people with mid-life struggles. For example, some people look for psychological or spiritual books to clarify their experiences or to learn how to deal with crises. Some others seek help from counselors and psychotherapists. Religious people often seek help from spiritual directors who can help them with spiritual growth and give them insight into their psychological issues.

Spiritual directors can help mid-life people understand what might be holding them back from a fuller more integrated life and help them discover positive approaches to fuller maturity in faith. Spiritual direction emphasizes one's relationship with God. Thus, seeking help from spiritual directors can help people resolve psychological conflicts and discover their potential to love and do good for God and others. Kenneth Leech states, "The aim of spiritual direction is the achievement of wholeness of life, an integrated personality, in which the inner

and the outer man are united. Yet to become whole and integrated is painful, it is a process which involves conflict and crisis, and all spiritual direction is involved in the crises of the soul" (as cited in Studzinski, 1985, p. 7). Directors try to encourage people to deal with their anxiety and suffering by suggesting they not deny or project outward but honestly confront and accept whatever arises from within themselves. Therefore, the help of a spiritual director and a sense of openness to themselves before the God of truth can help people become more fully themselves before God. They will find it easier to accept all of their feelings and especially their negative and dark side. Reflection and a sense of acceptance in spiritual direction is health producing and a source of spiritual growth because it both nurtures healthier religious life and emotional well being.

Mid-life can be a time of conversion. Carl Jung wrote that mid-life people coming to him for counseling reported that religious questioning was their central dilemma. Studzinski (1985) also asserted that the transition into mid-life can bring people with opportunities to reexamine and modify their relationships and their views of self, God, and others. These experiences can lead people to the movement of a deeper conversion. Conversion involves changing one's orientation to life; it is an opportunity to move toward greater openness to the truth and the goodness of God. Conversion also requires people to give up their prejudices and former lifestyle for a more mature and fuller life. It is painful and a struggling process, but it can lead people to a transforming experience with God.

People at mid-life may feel that they are asked to surrender their freedom, their assumptions and their daily patterns of living. Thus, mid-life conversion can consist of considerable losses. The conversion process requires individuals to have a strong sense of acceptance in order to be open to the second journey for its spiritual and

human growth. O'Collins (1996) stated: "We must let go if we are to be broken up, remade and restructured. Our world suddenly comes apart at the seams. We cannot mend it. Let it come apart—even at the cost of much pain" (p. 67). She further emphasized that in the middle of life we are in death, we have to die to be reborn, and this rebirth can be more difficult than any other birth.

To cope with the second journey, individuals should be aware that the journey's end can either bring them to a new position in society or a continuation of existing commitments. For example, couples may live with each other because of their children; religious may continue to live in community because of their vows and love of service to the Church and others. In general, men and women who come to mid-life may have to leave their comfort zone in order to walk on strange and new roads. That is the way individuals on the second journey find peace when their conscious desires are reconciled (integrated) with their unconscious desires of the heart.

Prayer is also a good coping method for the second journey. O'Collins (1996) affirmed, "those persons whose lives have been consciously touched by God will not really or readily come to journey's end without prayer. Only that can turn such persons from being mere vagrants into becoming genuine pilgrims. Nothing less than the deep experience of God can ensure that their second journey will lead somewhere in the end" (p. 72). Prayer helps religious make better decisions and is a spiritual tool that connects individuals with God, with others and with themselves. Sr. Jean Salchert, a sister of St. Agnes, shared with me her experience of mid-life:

My mid-life crisis happened most poignantly in the third decade of my life. During this time I was searching deeper into who I was and what God was calling me to. My sister and her husband were delving more into Scripture. I decided that I too needed and wanted to do the same. This really made a

big difference in my life. Some of the things I did to help with my spiritual growth were: making a month long House of Prayer with the Carmelites in Peterborough, NH, making a directed thirty day retreat with the Capuchins in Marathon, WI, reading the Bible from cover to cover which included all the introductions to each book, taking time each morning to meditate on Scripture, and read books on spiritual life, prayer, and scripture. At this time I was also praying about the possibility of becoming a cloistered nun. Part of this was because of my struggle with shyness. I was more of an observer than an actor (Salchert, personal conversation, 2013).

CONCLUSION

To sum up the notion of mid-life, I think that religious men and women might experience burn-out if their ministry just focuses on the functional dimension of doing, performing, achieving, and succeeding. They should know their limited ability and energy and be courageous to say "no" if they are not able to handle too much work at the same time. Instead, religious should foster their religious life by constant connecting with God through prayer and service. Otherwise, they will become disconnected from God, the source of truth and the purpose of their life. If they do not have time to cultivate, abide and be open and receptive to grow in an intimate and living relationship with God, their busy functional doing will permeate their religious life.

Mid-life crises are an opportunity for people to review their lives and discover what brought them into a crisis situation. To balance their religious life, they should slow down and simply listen attentively to what is happening. If so, they will be able to admit humbly something is wrong; their life not in harmony, suffering a loss of peace of body, mind, and spirit. In addition, if they can listen to the quiet voice within themselves, they may discover that their mid-life crisis is of the transcendent, of the spirit, of Mystery, of the Sacred, and of one's relationship with

God. Their dried up, exhausted, fatigued body, depression, anxiety, anger, loneliness, boredom, lack of deeper meaning and purpose, lack of gentleness and humility, all may be telling them something. If they recognize those moments and connect to God, those moments can be a great time for spiritual growth and renewal. The spirit of God will emerge and cover over all the emptiness and dryness. It is important to remember that the main focus of doing ministry is on God, not on ourselves nor on the work of God. We will learn a great deal with a new discovery when we can let go of ourselves and allow others to teach us. We grow more by giving ourselves away. This does not mean losing one's identity but letting go of our "ego", our "pride," our desire to "do it my way" and allowing God's way to flourish and take shape in us. By doing so, we discover new meaning as well as discover new experiences when we step into other people's worlds and try to understand where they came.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sister Yen K. Le, LHC is a Sister of the Lovers of the Holy Cross, Hanoi, Vietnam. Her most recent article, "Consecrated Celibacy: Theological and Psychological Views for Women Religious in Vietnam," was published in the journal of Religious Life Asia in 2014. Yen Le is currently a PhD student in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola University Maryland. Prior to that, she studied the dual degree in Mental Health Counseling (MA) and Pastoral Ministry (MA) at Boston College. She also earned her BS degree in Psychology with a second major in Theology at Spring Hill College. Being an in-trained counselor in mental health and spiritual care, Yen Le is interested in writing on the topics of human religious/spiritual and psychological development.

IN MY OPINION



Sr. Yen takes the reader through a review of the literature surrounding mid-life issues. Although, her highlights that women more often than men report having had an experience relating to mid-

life related issues. From my experience, men go through some of the same issues highlighted in the article. However, men have the tendency to keep these feelings to themselves.

With the average lifespan increasing, A mid-life experience may also occur later. This may be true in religious life. In my role on province leadership, I have encountered several men who are dealing with issues related to mid-life. They manifest themselves by overeating, disregard towards authority, and frozen anger.

Further, from my perception, male religious face, as Sr. Yen stated, issues ranging from mid-life crazy to mid-life reassessment. I have had opportunities to accompany male religious in this crisis which brings with it added stressors and thus would be best served in a discernment to identify where God is calling them during this time of a life change. I found that when male religious attended to a healthy and whole spiritual life (retreat, spiritual direction and current reading), exercise, smart healthy diet, and regular consultation with their primary physician that the pain associated with the change was managed easily.

Further, being in a satisfying ministry was an added plus, because fewer “unconscious conflicts” surfaced. This allowing the religious to be transparent with those they serve and be a witness to a strong relationship with their God.

From my time in province leadership in a religious community where the primary ministry is education, I could relate to Sr. Yen’s reference to Fr. Quyen Vu, SJ’s experience as a new administrator. I have found this to be a true concern with younger administrators dealing with an aging faculty population. When they had not dealt with their own life issues yet, they would become overwhelmed and this would often lead to a sense of religious burnout. This in turn, leads to multiple layers of unresolved personal life business.

When I was in school leadership, at the time, our province leader, would challenge us to consider how power, prestige and privilege impacted our local leadership roles. Much like [insert authors name] when he/she stated “at mid-life, people gradually realize their focus of life is not so much on achievement, power, and ideals of getting ahead.” citation is needed My experience echoes that of Sr. Yen’s when the religious have to change ministry due to health or a change in community direction.

At that point they begin to question all that they had done over the years and whether it made a difference in the lives of those they served. Thus this transition often refers “to the experience of darkness, such as a crisis about the meaning and purpose of life, depression and loneliness. Darkness means not only negative aspects of low experience, but also anything preventing people from pursuing positive features of their life experience.” citation needed This can often be translated as a vocation crisis of meaning and right decisions made by the religious to live

a vowed life. Anytime an personal experience holds a religious back from feeling God's presence the result can be in unhealthy behaviors. This is where supervision and spiritual direction can be helpful as to discovering a level of "integration between the unconscious and the conscious."

My role in province leadership is often to act as sounding board, an active listener and someone to offer non-judgmental feedback to what I have seen and heard. This is where I need to be honest about my personal work and commitment to ongoing self-discovery. This is where, Sr. Yen's referenced "the need for silence and prayer must be in balanced with the need for community of friends." As Sr. Yen states "we will learn a great deal with a new discovery when we can let go of ourselves and allow others to teach us. We grow more by giving ourselves away." This applies both to the individual in the midst of a mid-life crisis and the individual accompanying them: thus both parties are discovering new meaning in their lives.

I had the opportunity of reflection on this article during a Holy Week retreat. While in a quiet moment, I noticed on the wall of my room, a plaque with the following quote, that I will close with and think it helps to make meaning of this mid-life crisis that so many people face. It is adapted from an original verse by Bessie Anderson entitled "That Man is a Success."

*Who has lived well, laughed often and loved much;
who has gained the respect of intelligent women
and men and the love of children;
who never lacks appreciation of the earth's beauty
or fails to express it; who follows his dreams and
pursues excellence in each task; and who brings out
the best in others, and gives only the best of himself.*

Br. Raymond J. Vercruysse, CFC Ed.D, presently ministers from Elizabeth, NJ as a member of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers Leadership team in North America. He has been a teacher, counselor, administrator on the secondary and university level. He has been vocation director for the brothers and has attended two congregation chapters, one in India and Africa.

INSPIRATION

Submitted by Fr. George Hazler

"Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is not ended." (From the Funeral Mass)

Well one day a caterpillar was speaking to a butterfly.

"Tell me," said the caterpillar;

"What is a butterfly?"

"It's what you are meant to become, replied the butterfly. It flies with beautiful wings and joins the earth to heaven. It drinks only nectar from the flowers and carries the seeds of love from one flower to another; without butterflies the world would soon have few flowers." said the butterfly.

The caterpillar replied: "It can't be true. How can I believe there's a butterfly inside you or me when all I see is a fuzzy worm?" So how does one become a butterfly? "Well," said the butterfly, "you must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar."

"You mean to die?" asked the caterpillar. "Yes and no," the butterfly answered. "What looks like you will die but what's really you will still live. Life is changed not taken away. Once you are a butterfly you can really love the kind of love that makes new life. It's better than all the hugging caterpillars can do. So if you want to be a prisoner in that fuzzy outfit of yours,

I guess that's up to you. But you don't have to. You too can become a butterfly"

In the Preface of the Funeral Mass we hear the words: "Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is



changed not ended..."

I firmly believe these words are relevant not only at the time of a funeral but how many times have we experienced a form of dying in our lives, how often our life has changed but not ended. We face many transitional moments during a lifetime – moments when we need to die in order to move on to new life. It seems that every beginning needs an ending. "Transition takes place within us.

It deeply affects our attitude! The starting point for transition is not the outcome but the ending that you will have to make to leave the old situation behind." William Bridges



And at some point or situation in life we all need to let go, most dramatic being the death of a loved one. How do we go on living once we have let go of someone we've loved; parents letting go of children on their first day of school or a child going off to college? Once again, life is changed, not ended. Weddings present another moment when parents need to let go of their son or daughter. Once again life is changed not ended.

"The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said to them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for you have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Ex. 16:1-3) They forgot the slavery portion of life in Egypt and once again life was changed but not ended.

"Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that. You cannot hold onto the old, all the while declaring that you want something new. The old will defy the new; the old will deny the new; the old will decry the new. There is only one way to bring in the new. You must make room for it." Neale Donald Walsch

And so my friends life is changed not ended as we move from the season of Lent into Easter joy - a time to experience new life, a life that hopefully has been changed through the discipline of Lent but not ended.

"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Psalm 118



TO BE OR NOT TO BE;

A REFLECTION ON CULTURE, COMMITMENT AND INTEGRITY

By Michael Morton, M.A.



INTRODUCTION

Margaret Meade in her work, *Culture and Commitment, A Study of the Generation Gap*, explored the issue of commitment and its possibilities in a world of radical change. She believed the struggle for commitment to be a greater problem than the "identity issue". Of recent note has been the literature on priestly life, and analysis of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among clergy. In my experience over the last 30 years, the issue of commitment is and will continue to be at the core of serious concerns for those who would be followers of Jesus. The topic most relative to commitment is the culture in which one is committed and the integrity of that culture. Meade writes:

"Today the central problem is commitment: to what past, present, or future can the idealistic young commit themselves? The idea of choice in commitment entered human history when competing styles of life were endowed with new kinds of sanction of religious or political ideology. No longer a matter of minor comparisons between tribes, as civilization developed commitment became a matter of choice between entire systems of thought...It was then that the question: To which do I commit my life? was raised for the thoughtful in a form that only temporarily disappears when faith and society and culture are temporarily reunited in isolated and barricaded form in closed religious sects like the Hutterites - or behind iron curtains into which no alien note is permitted to enter.

Of particular concern to Meade was the continuity of the species as well as individual cultures essential to that survival. She reflected upon the unique nature of a time when all the world could be known at a point where the most primitive and the most complex might meet. She suggested that such a time in history might never be replicated; at least not on this planet. The diversity of the myriad ways people live and believe opened a world of possibility and question never before possible.

In this century, with rising insistence and anguish, there is now a new note: Can I commit my life to anything? Is there anything in human cultures as they exist today worth saving, worth committing to? Just as man is faced with responsibility for not destroying the human race and all living things and for using his accumulated knowledge to build a safe world, so at this moment the individual is freed to stand aside and question, not only his belief in God, his belief in science, or his belief in socialism, but his belief in anything at all. It is my conviction that in addition to the world conditions that have given rise to this search for new commitment and to this possibility to no commitment at all, we also have new resources for facing our situation, new grounds for commitment...only as we come to terms with our past and our present is there a future for the oldest and the youngest among us who share the total round."

THE FUTURE

Meade asked her question in a world rapidly evolving and/or dissolving. The disintegration of previous cultures, the rapidity of globalization and corporate enculturation have forever left behind the predictable and certain future our elders at one time were able to prepare the next generation to face. They knew far better than the young what the future would hold. Today the greatest challenge may be the possibility of no future for millions facing annihilation from famine, war, ecological disaster, and disease. There are radical and irreversible changes, which have taken place. These changes have forever altered the way we have known the world of our ancestors and for some our own childhood.

This can be very striking. An example is visiting the mother house of an African Missionary Society and seeing the artifacts of the peoples once served now more ornamental and for display. It is the same feeling or sense of dissonance observing a man in a monastic cloister wearing his habit operating a computerized billing system. In one monastery such an upgrade cost one of the monks his job! One might also be struck by the corporate appearance of many pastoral centers around the country. For some the change is met with simple

denial pretending the old exists as it always has in spite of radical changes.

There is the relationship between personalities, communities and possibilities for the future in the critical process of meaning making. The past, the present, and the future are of major concerns for the community and the Church. The education, formation, and socialization of the next generation is the result of some intact people, a committed community no matter how scattered and stressed. They might be defined as those with a common past, future hope, and the capacity to interpret one another in the present. (Josiah Royce). I think there are aspects of a specific culture which can not be ignored if that culture is to survive in an authentic form regardless of other changes in society.

LEADERSHIP

Ultimately the young must believe there are those who can teach them the significance of the culture's norms or they will, according to Meade, become "uninvolved and exploitatively compliant with



rules that they regard as meaningless.” Going through the forms by which men were educated for generations, but which no longer serve to educate those who accept them, can only teach students to regard all social systems in terms of exploitation”. My sense of this as applicable to formation for ministry is the willingness of some to comply in order to “get ordained”. For others who may or may not be well-intentioned, compliance is a way to maintain a personal agenda, career track and so forth. I believe the majority struggle with norms and this is a healthy developmental learning process.

POSSIBILITIES

Meade believed that there are few elders who can possibly understand what it is the young are going through. She described this as a “crises of faith for the young... feeling they have been deprived of every kind of security”.

Using the metaphor of childbirth and the skills of the parent, Meade suggests we look at the gifts



the elders do possess and can offer to the next generation. “No one can know in advance what the child will become... No one can know how his mind will work... But knowing what we do not know, we can construct an environment in which a child, still unknown, can be safe and can grow and discover himself and the world.” In the past culture was maintained by committed members who were formed and shaped by those who understood what faced the young. The elders provided for the necessary support for change and maintaining the commitment of the young. “Love and trust, based on dependency and answering care, made it possible for the individual reared in one culture to move into another, transforming without destroying his earlier learning.”

THE TASK

In a very complicated world where it is fair to say men have gone too far in betraying the past, I think they have betrayed the future. The betrayal of the trust that Meade suggests is essential to the formation of the new, appears repeatedly among the elders. Her conclusion is that which is most human is not the “ability to learn”, but the ability to teach and store what others have taught. In the past men have relied on the simplest part of a very complicated system which was the ability of the young to learn. Now we must move to a far more complicated part of the process through which culture is transmitted and renewed, the behavior of the elders.

“We must cultivate the most flexible and complex part of the system-the behavior of adults. We must, in fact, teach ourselves how to alter adult behavior... We must create new models for adults who can teach the value of the commitment.”

These comments are as troubling to the left as to the right as to the middle. They reflect the command of the Gospel. It is a radical call to be that which we are calling others to be. They suggest our dilemma is not the young, but those who are the models for the young. I need not list the issues around the behavior of the elders these days of painful scandal in the Church, The White House, Corporate America and Academia. I am suggesting we need to consider the impact.



INTEGRITY

The integrity of the elders in an authentic community or family is dependent upon the transmission of truth, values, beliefs, rituals, and passion. The elders by exemplary living sustain the identity of a people and the individual member's commitment to that people. Unless there is this "generativity" and "integrity" in the words of Erik Erickson, the result is stagnation. Integrity involves the wisdom of the elders and in a sense faith that they have run the course. All of the stages in his schema are interdependent and it is the final which facilitates the emergence of the new. The ritual he attributes to "Old Age" is the "Philosophical: for in maintaining some order and meaning in the disintegration of body and mind, it can also advocate a durable hope in wisdom. The corresponding ritualistic danger, however, is dogmatism, a compulsive pseudointegrity that, where linked to undue power, can become a coercive orthodoxy." Ekikson, (1982.)

SOME SUGGESTIONS

I am painfully aware of my own limitations as the father of children at various stage of development from childhood to young adulthood. I have become convinced that our offspring practice what they see, become what they practice, and that what they become has consequences for themselves, others and the world. A recurrent theme to this father's conscience is, "How I might have been or may become now, a better example?"

The responsibility of those invested with the formation of those in ministry begins with self and one another. The integrity of the body is physical, social, and spiritual, and intellectual. If we were to practice what we wish others to become, this might be a first step. Programs of attraction, admiration, and a healthy dependency upon the example and modeling of the elders is critical to the continuity of the culture. I believe all the elders must create safe and spiritually challenging communities of support for one another and those being shaped in the ministry. I say this as a result of listening to the experiences of men who have been troubled by their experiences in seminary and formation. In some cases these experiences have resulted in the inability to make commitments and life long struggles with the after effects.

This may sound simplistic, but I think not. We have fallen short of the mark. We have as educators, parents, elders, and leadership failed in many ways to be that which we are called to be. What the young need and want is integrity, and commitment. The young want someone, something to believe in and commit to. If we do not measure up then that is where we must begin. I believe we live with the ongoing need to decide to be or not to be that to which we are called. No amount of research, curriculum development, sociological studies or meetings can resolve our present dilemma. In our pursuit of integrity we can become the culture of support for the next generation. The Good News is we have. It is the courage to be. That's what we need to work on.

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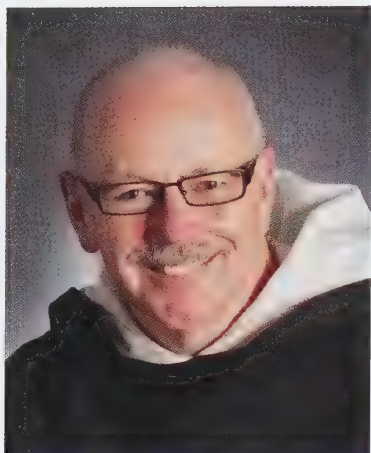
THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED FROM THE SPRING 2003 ISSUE OF SEMINARY JOURNAL, PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION, NCEA.ORG.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael Morton, M.A., LMFT, NCGC-1, CSAT-S, is a therapist and educator with over twenty years experience. He is a licensed family therapist in Pennsylvania, a clinical member and Approved Supervisor of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and a clinical member of The American Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. Michael currently works for KeyStone Center Extended Care Unit located in Chester, PA. He has presented for numerous Diocesan Clergy and Religious Congregation convocations and leadership conferences and other professional associations throughout the United States, Mexico, Canada, Ireland and India addressing topics of Addiction and Recovery, Health, Spirituality, Trauma, Boundaries, Ethics, Risk Management, Stress and Distress in Ministry, Culture and Commitment, Intergenerational Solidarity, Compassion Fatigue, and Human Development.

IN MY OPINION



A Place to Stand
Culture, Inter-
generational
Tension and
Religious
Formation
Michael Morton
(and Margaret
Meade) touch
on a critically
important issue
in the Church
and in religious
formation.

They rightly note that young Catholics are anxious about commitment. The evidence is everywhere. Nearly half of them come from homes broken by divorce. They are marrying later than their parents or grandparents. They no longer commit to – or expect commitment from – employers. They will routinely change jobs many times during their lives. Even though many have deep faith lives – or at least spiritual awareness – a large percentage of them are classified as “nones”, that is, having no religious affiliation at all.

They are anxious about war, anxious about the economy, far more anxious than we were about the environment and global warming, and anxious about whether they can trust our generation. Are we the real thing, or have we drifted so far from solid Catholicism that we can't be trusted?

We have experienced this in our own community. One student brother told me I just couldn't understand because I “had all of those things” of traditional Catholicism. “We feel cheated,” he said, “we just want what you had.” Some of our older brothers have not always been helpful. They resent what they see as restorationism and sometimes go out of their way to annoy young members by refusing to observe certain liturgical rubrics or participate in spiritual exercises they thought were long gone. As a result some seminarians have skipped a generation or two as they look for security and truth. They have

adopted superannuated role models, people like Mother Angelica, Benedict Ashley and Benedict Groeschel as spiritual grandparents. They see them as survivors of the great theology wars of the 60s and 70s, so firmly rooted in the traditional church that they can be relied on for a good example.

When I was president of our theology school, we often had tension between young and more traditional students and older faculty members. The faculty members were on the cutting edges of their disciplines, exploring non-traditional biblical hermeneutics, the ritual and anthropological roots of our sacramental life, and the psychological aspects of moral theology. What our students wanted was old-time religion. Nothing bad or regressive, but “just the facts.” At first I was impatient with all of this, but then I began to see that what students were looking for was a “place to stand” theologically. They felt adrift in a world of uncertainty. It was not unreasonable for them to want to get the basics down before they were forced to deal with more questions and options.

I had to repeatedly remind faculty that especially in introductory classes, they had to focus on the objective content of the tradition and hold off on some of the more subjective and interpretive stuff until students had a couple of years of study. There is also a need for reciprocity. Just as we expect the young to value our experience and learn from us, so we too need to learn from them. They have perspectives and an awareness of the needs of the contemporary world that we do not. We sometimes talk about loss of Catholic identity, but in fact we're really talking about Catholic culture, which is a much richer concept. Culture is very important here, since we are trying to initiate the next generation into something that is more than a name and more than a set of doctrinal propositions. We want them to feel something, to have something rather than to merely know about it. This is especially important in Catholicism, where so much of our ethos is non-verbal.

In their book on Catholic higher education, Melanie Morey and John Piderit speak about Catholic culture. Culture, they say, has content, symbols and actors. Content includes attitudes, beliefs, values and norms. To survive, these components of culture must be distinctive and inheritable. Is the Catholic life or religious charism we are living distinctive enough? More importantly, can we pass this culture on to the next generation, especially when we have far fewer “virtuosos” (life-long committed religious and clergy who have the primary responsibility for bearing and nurturing the culture) than we used to?

That is the crux of our problem right now -- on both a personal discipleship level and on an institutional level. Our hospitals and schools are struggling mightily (or should be) to assure that the culture that was nourished by the founders is preserved by future generations. If we are having difficulty witnessing to and passing on this culture in the intensive environment of religious formation, how can we even hope to achieve it on an institutional level?

We are the cultural actors, those whose beliefs and actions shape and sustain culture. So what about our actions and the example we give? Are we true and authentic? Are we witnessing to the best of our tradition? Now that I am leadership, I am very aware of this challenge. I am also aware that our image has been tarnished by the clerical abuse crisis. I ask every candidate who applies for admission to the province how the abuse crisis affected them. They are well aware of it, but somehow they have managed to see through it and have not let it obscure the Church’s holiness. Their trust and their ability to move beyond the scandal have been a great inspiration to me. It has caused me to reassess my own life and even to recommit. I pray that with God’s grace I am a “good enough” model who can carefully steward the gifts they bring.

Charles E. Bouchard, OP, is Provincial of the Dominican Province of St. Albert the Great (Chicago), and former professor of moral theology and president of Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. He has written extensively on Catholic identity and leadership formation.

1 See Don Goergen “What Newer and Older Members Offer Each Other” (Horizon, publication of the National Religious Vocation Conference, Summer 2013.)

2 *Catholic Higher Education: A Culture in Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). They also note the importance of cultural citizens, who live the culture, and cultural catalysts who animate and lead it. See Chapter 2 for a fuller description.

3 (See Patricia Wittberg’s *From Piety to Professionalism and Back: Transformations of Organized Religious Virtuosity* (Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2006) for an excellent study on virtuosity in both Catholic and Protestant settings. See especially Chapter 2, “Organizational Identity.”



UPDATE FROM CARA

New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows

A recent survey of women and men religious who professed perpetual vows in 2014 in a religious congregation based in the United States by CARA reveals who is answering the call to religious life. The survey asked about their family background, previous education, work, and ministry experience prior to entering their institute, and how they came to consider their current institute.

Ninety percent of the 460 religious institutes that responded to CARA did not have anyone who professed perpetual vows in 2014. While 190 individuals professed perpetual vows in 2014, 118 responded to the survey. The youngest respondent was 24 while the oldest respondent was 64, the average respondent was 37 years of age.

One-fourth of the respondents were born outside of the United States, the two most common countries they originated from are the Philippines and Vietnam. On average those born outside the United States were 23 when they came into the country and lived here for 16 years before they professed their perpetual vows. Two-thirds of the respondents identify as white, non-Hispanic while 15 percent identify as Hispanic and the same percent identify as Asian. Fewer than 5 percent identify as African/African-American/black.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The responding religious were asked when they became Catholic. Among those responding, 86 percent were born Catholic, the remaining 14 percent came from several different faith backgrounds such as Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, Unitarian, United Church of Christ, and some didn't profess any religion. The average age of those who joined the Church later was 24 years old.

When asked about their family background most religious say their parents are both Catholic and 79

percent have at least one sibling. The most common number of siblings is two, although around a third have four or more siblings. Religious are also more likely to be one of the middle children (44 percent) than the youngest or oldest.

EDUCATION, WORK, AND MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

The religious respondents were just as likely to go to a Catholic elementary school as other Catholic adults nationally. However, they are slightly more likely to attend a Catholic high school (31 percent of responding religious compared to 22 percent of U.S. adult Catholics) and five times more likely to attend a Catholic college than other U.S. Catholics (34 percent of responding religious compared to 7 percent of U.S. adult Catholics).

The responding religious are highly educated. One in five entered their religious institute with a graduate degree while two thirds obtained a bachelor's degree before entering their religious institute. According to the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2013) both of these numbers are twice as large as the average U.S. resident.

Most religious reported not delaying entering because of debt, although those that did have debt had an average of around \$16,000 in educational debt. While several women reported receiving assistance paying off their debt none of the men reported receiving assistance.

Almost all of the respondents were employed before entering their religious institutes. A quarter of those respondents were part time while two thirds were full time. The female respondents were more likely to work in health care while the men were more likely to work in business or education.

Many responding religious were active in Catholic

activities centered on young people before entering their religious institute. At least one in five participated in youth activities such as youth ministry or youth group, Catholic campus ministry, Newman Center, or World Youth Day. However, few participated in Catholic activities centered on adults before entering their institutes. Less than one in ten participated in National Evangelization Team, St. Vincent de Paul Society, or as a Religious institute volunteer.

The majority of responding religious had some type of ministry experience before entering their religious institute. At least a third served in voluntary ministry positions such as lectors, ministry in faith formation, music ministry, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, altar server, or in a social service ministry. One in ten were involved in a professional ministry, such as teaching in a Catholic school or in a hospital or prison ministry.

The vast majority of the responding religious brothers and sisters regularly had a private prayer activity before they entered their institute. Around three quarters of them participated in Eucharistic Adoration or prayed the rosary, and more than half participated in retreats or spiritual direction before entering.

CONSIDERATION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND CHOICE OF COMMUNITY

On average religious report they were 19 years old when they started to consider a religious vocation. Half of them report that a priest or a religious brother or sister encouraged them to consider a vocation while four in ten report that they were encouraged by a friend. However, far fewer family members encouraged them to consider a vocation, only a quarter or less report that their mother, father, or other relatives encouraged them to consider a religious vocation.

A majority of the respondents also reported that they were discouraged from considering a vocation by one or more persons. The people who discouraged them were most likely a family member other than their parent or a friend/classmate.

Half of the newly professed report they knew the members of their institute for two or more years before they entered. A third first became acquainted with their institute through promotional materials published by the institute while a fifth first learned of their institute through the recommendation of a priest or advisor.

Around nine in ten of the respondents participated in some type of vocation program/experience prior to entering their institute. The two most common experiences were the "Come and See" experience and a vocation retreat; over half of respondents report participating in one of these programs. Men are slightly more likely to participate in these experiences than women.

The full report, "New Sisters and Brothers Professing Perpetual Vows in Religious Life: The Profession Class of 2014" is available at uscgb.org.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Guest House Summer Leadership Conference

Somerset Inn
Troy, MI
July 20-22, 2015

Guest House Walking with the Wounded

Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI
May 6-8, 2015
June 3-5, 2015
October 7-9, 2015

Guest House "Run Over Addiction" 5K Run/Walk

Lake Orion, MI
May 16, 2015

Guest House 30th Annual Golf Classic

Oakhurst Golf and Country Club
Clarkston, MI
June 15, 2015

Inter-Congregational Addiction Program Retreat for Women Religious

Carmelite Spiritual Center
Darien, IL
June 28-July 4, 2015

Guest House Alumni Reunion

St. Ender's Retreat at Enders Island
Mystic, CT
August 3-6, 2015

Inter-Congregational Addiction Program Retreat for Women Religious

Guest House for Women Religious
Lake Orion, MI
August 16-22, 2015

Guest House 57th Annual Bishop's Dinner

Somerset Inn
Troy, MI
October 15, 2015



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